Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children: Childhood, Agency and Integration

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CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the practices and understandings of integration of asylum-seekers, under 18, who arrive in the UK without parent, guardian or carer. The recognition of children as active participants in society is widespread across the social sciences, yet this critical enquiry into the integration of unaccompanied minors brings new understandings concerning the form and complexities of agency. Unaccompanied minors are situated within the discursive grouping of 'childhood', conferring a position of inherent vulnerability and a statutory obligation to offer protection. Simultaneously, as asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors are subject to the exclusionary structures of immigration control. This thesis investigates how unaccompanied minors negotiate their own integration within this seemingly contradictory matrix.

Located within the qualitative, interpretive tradition, this thesis is comprised of a dialogue of methods, including reflexive participant observation, ethnographic tools and relational practices to produce an innovative and richly situated work. It follows the daily lives of a group of young men in and around a city in southern England over 11 months in 2017 as they negotiate systems of asylum, education and children's services and as they build relationships with people and place. It argues for an understanding of agency that is relational, contextual and dynamic. It also argues for an understanding of integration as multiple in form and focused on the quotidian, seemingly ordinary interactions and assemblages practised by the young men.

Key words: agency, childhood, integration, ethnography, assemblage

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

KEY TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

Asylum Seeker: An asylum seeker refers to a person who is outside their country of origin, has applied formally for asylum in another country and is awaiting the decision on his/her application. This means he or she has applied to be recognised as a refugee (see below). The Refugee Council prefers to use the term 'person seeking asylum', feeling that the term 'asylum seeker' is dehumanising (Refugee Council, 2020)

Child/Children: I use the term 'child' or 'children', rather than 'young person' or 'young people', when referring to a legally-defined category used in statutory discourse appertaining to 'individuals who are under 18 years of age' (Home Office, 2019b, p.10). I prefer the term 'young people' to be used wherever possible, as I feel it more accurately represents the life experience and maturity of the participants. As my participants who were seeking asylum were all male, I refer to them as 'young men' throughout.

The **Interim Transfer Protocol** preceded the **National Transfer Scheme**, which allows for a local authority to transfer the responsibility of a UASC to a different local authority with a lower number of UASCs in their care. The scheme operates on a voluntary basis- local authorities are not compelled to accept transferred children- and is intended to address unfair burden placed on authorities such as Kent, which by virtue of geography, receive a disproportionately high number of UASCs compared to other local authorities (Home Office and Department for Education, 2018).

Refugee: A refugee is defined according to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as:

> *A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.*
>
> (UN General Assembly, 1951)

In the UK, should the Home Office agree that the person meets the criteria of refugee as set out above, refugees are usually given five years' leave to remain and must then apply for further leave (Refugee Council, 2020)

Separated Child: A separated child is a person under 18, outside their country of origin who is separated from both parents and from customary/legal care giver. Whilst separated children are usually asylum seekers, this is not always the case (CCLC, 2017b)

UASC/ Unaccompanied minor: The Home Office uses the term UASC to refer to a person who is 'under 18 years of age or who, in the absence of documentary evidence establishing age, appears to be under that age' who 'is applying for asylum in their own right; and is separated from both parents and not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has the responsibility to do so' (CCLC, 2017b; Home Office, 2017, p.10).

UASC Leave: This is a form of leave given by the Home Office on the basis that the applicant is under 18 and that there are 'no safe, adequate reception arrangements in the home country. Leave is granted until the child is 17 and a half years old or for two and a half years, whichever is less.' (CCLC, 2017b, p.126)

Names of place and people have been changed and other identifiable features removed to preserve anonymity of the participants.

Whilst the acronym UASC is used throughout Home Office literature, I have used the term 'unaccompanied minor' as a descriptor. The young men in this research, whilst under 18 when they first claimed asylum, did not identify as 'children' and I found the phrase 'young men' a more appropriate and respectful descriptor. I also have concerns that reducing a group of people to an acronym can perpetuate acts of silencing. Consequently, I use the term 'young men' to refer to those I met during fieldwork and 'unaccompanied minors' to refer to this category more generally. I employ the term 'UASC' when used specifically in government publications and statistics, as this refers to a precise legal position.

CRISES, REPRESENTATION AND VOICE

> *Like most people, I found it impossible to get the image of that poor Syrian boy Aylan [sic] Kurdi out of my mind. We know in our hearts our responsibilities to help those fleeing for their lives. But we know, too, that we must keep our heads. Let's start with a simple fact. Twelve million people have been made homeless by the conflict in Syria. And so far only 4% of them have come to Europe. If we opened the door to every refugee, our country would be overwhelmed. The best thing Britain can do is help neighbouring countries, the Syrian people and the refugees in the camps and when we do take refugees, to take them from the region, rather than acting in a way that encourages more to make that dangerous journey*

Prime Minister David Cameron, Conservative Party Conference, 2015 (Behr, 2015)

> *These don't look like 'children' to me. I hope British hospitality is not being abused*
>
> David Davies MP, Twitter, October 17th, 2016, (Davies, 2016)

As I began this thesis in 2015, the so-called 'Refugee Crisis' was occupying much of the media in the UK and across the EU, forming 'one of the most heavily mediated world events of the past decade' (Triling, 2019). The UNHCR proclaimed global refugee figures to be at an all-time high (de Haas, 2016) while footage of makeshift camps, such as those in Calais, alongside overcrowded boats attempting to cross the Mediterranean provoked polarised responses from tabloids, broadsheets, politicians and the NGO sector (Berry et al., 2016; Triling, 2019). In particular, the image of Aylan Kurdi, a young Kurdish boy found dead on a beach in Turkey in September 2015, was shared widely across social media and media outlets, provoking compassionate responses even from the tabloid press who usually adopted a more critical approach to the subjects of forced migration (Allegretti, 2015).

It was against this backdrop that I began my thesis, commencing fieldwork at the beginning of 2017 with a small group of young men who had arrived without parents or carers in the English city of Rothport. They came from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Kurdistan, Syria and Somalia. Most arrived knowing no one, with little English, having spent months travelling clandestinely across Europe. Some had been transferred to neighbouring Broomshire through the Government's new Interim Transfer Protocol, whilst others had first presented in Rothport or neighbouring local authorities having travelled illegally into the UK. The experiences and voices of these young men direct this thesis, which provides, following Geertz (1975) a 'rich

description[1]' of those who are all too often marginalized and rendered voiceless (Rajaram, 2002).

My purpose in this thesis is to convey the perspectives of the young men in order to understanding everyday agentive practices of integration. I gather these perspectives through spoken word but also through observations, behaviours, nuances and all manner of communications. As I am interested in gathering multiple representations (Ellingson, 2009), I have thus also included participants in the form of support workers, teachers, carers, politicians, social workers, faith leaders and others. I have included non-asylum-seeking young men, the wider refugee community in Rothport, as well as published material and training resources that informed the fieldwork period. The outcome of this endeavour is a rich, multi-faceted, partial and situated account of a highly diverse young men who are:

> *… active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live.*
>
> (Prout and James, 1997, p. 7)

The thesis uses ethnographic methods, comprising participant observation, interviews with participants, examinations of relationships, meanings and spatial and temporal locations (Caulkins, 2014). The value of ethnography as a method of enquiry into children and young people's cultural worlds is identified as a key feature of the paradigm of childhood studies (Prout and James, 1997), as it allows 'children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research' (ibid., p.7).

Unaccompanied minors, including those with whom I spent time during the fieldwork months, are at risk of marginalisation and silencing on multiple fronts: in the field of academia and in policy and practice from state and third-sector actors. As migrants and as asylum-seekers, unaccompanied minors are embroiled within public narratives of hostility and cultures of disbelief from government agencies (Mulvey, 2010). As children, unaccompanied minors are silenced through developmental models of childhood, that position childhood as a biologically inherent state of irrationality and simplicity of thought (Prout and James, 1997).

[1] Whilst the term 'thick description' is widely used in qualitative research, usage often lacks precision (Ponterotto, 2006). It is used here in line with Denzin's (2001) expansion of Geertz's (1975) application of the term: 'A thick description… does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard' (Denzin, 2001, p. 83)

The nature of research with unaccompanied minors can also meet several practical and methodological challenges. When conducting research with unaccompanied minors, it is not uncommon to be met with mistrust and apprehension from the young people. Kohli (2006) notes the tendency for unaccompanied minors to be reticent or to remain silent when meeting with someone perceived to be in authority. Many such young people, confronted with the cultures of disbelief that permeate the asylum system in all its guises, may respond with 'thin' stories that can fit neatly into the narrative expected from decision-makers (White, 1997; Ayotte, 2000; Kohli, 2006; Crawley, 2010, 2011). Relationships of trust, necessary for rich data and for meaningful informed consent, therefore take considerable time to develop (Hugman et al., 2011). Ethnography, based on long-term fieldwork and being relatively unstructured in nature, facilitates the establishment of such relationships. Furthermore, encompassing a range of methods over time allows for communication and sharing of meaning across linguistic and cultural difficulties, hence the underpinning of this research on the concept of 'crystallization' (Ellingson, 2009). Crystallization, 'combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts (ibid., p.4). This permits the collation of multiple realities, indicative of the constructivist epistemology that is foundational to this research project.

In the following sections of this chapter, I first outline important contextual information regarding the phenomenon and representations of unaccompanied child migrants in the UK at the time of writing. I then introduce the research aims, objectives and questions of this thesis, before briefly setting out an outline of the chapters to follow. Finally, I outline some key definitions and clarifications regarding terminology.

CHILDREN SEEKING SANCTUARY

The term UASC refers to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child, defined as:

> *… an individual, who is under 18 when the asylum application is submitted, is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so, is separated from both and has applied for asylum in the United Kingdom in his/her own right.*
>
> (Home Office, 2019c, p.3)

The number of child refugees globally is estimated at around 13 million (The Children's Society, 2019). The UK received 3,063 applications for asylum from unaccompanied children in 2018; the chart below provides further information of long-term trends:

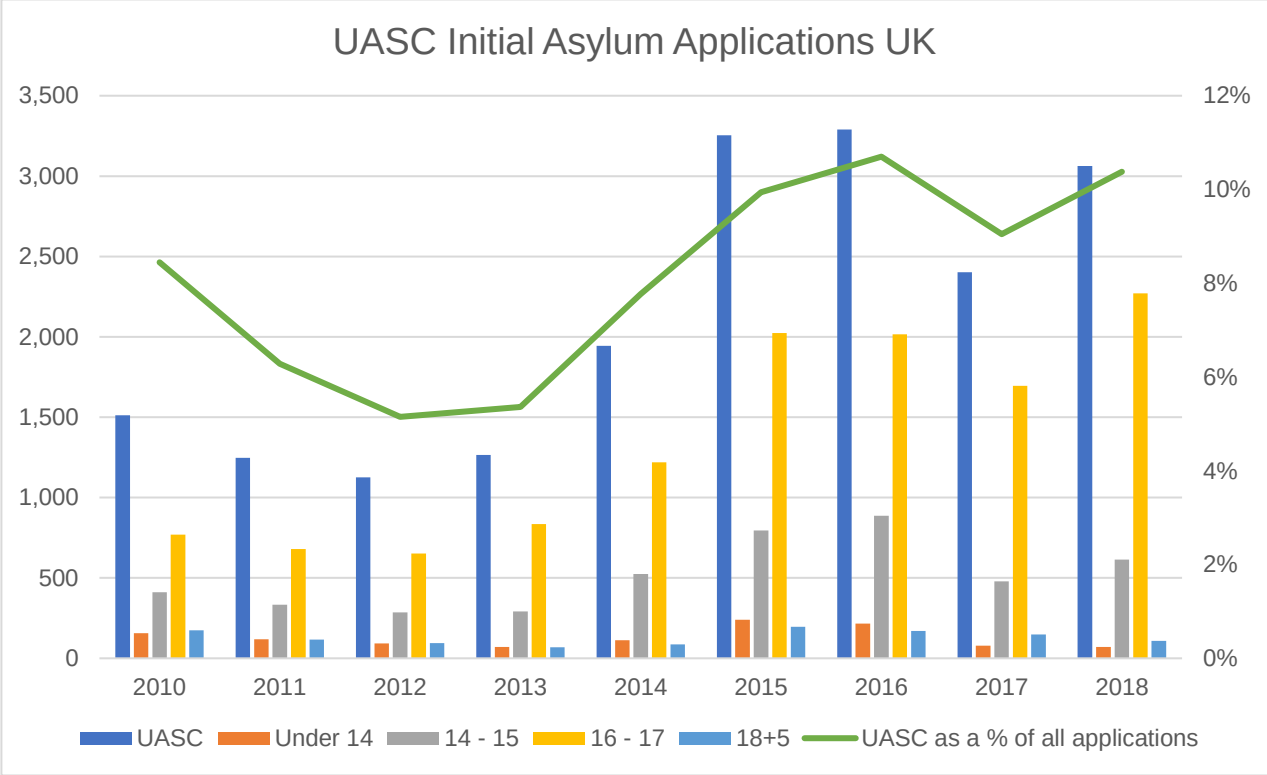


Figure 1 UASC Statistics (Home Office, 2019d)

Figure 1 above demonstrates trends in UASC statistics in the UK since 2010. The total number of UASCs (represented with the dark blue column) has increased over this period, peaking in 2016 at the height of the 'refugee crisis', when 3,290 unaccompanied children applied for asylum. As a percentage of all asylum applications, UASC numbers (green line) are relatively small, but increasing. Consistently, the largest age group of UASCs are 16-17-year olds (yellow column). UASCs comprise a relatively small number of total asylum applications in the UK forming just over 10% in 2018.

Figure 2 shows UASC applications by sex from 2014 through to 2018, demonstrating a long-term weighting towards male applicants.

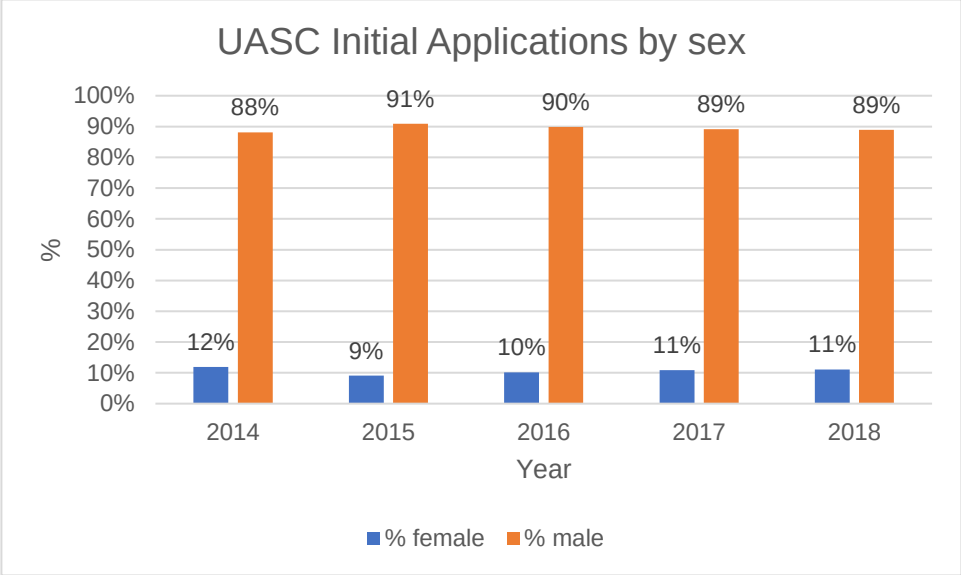


Figure 2 UASC Initial Applications by sex (Refugee Council 2019, p.11)

The Children Act (1989) mandates that unaccompanied children in the UK are cared for by the local authority as looked-after children. Prior to 2016, the local authority where the child first presented would assume responsibility. However, this meant that certain local authorities, such as Kent, which is home to the port of Dover, were responsible for a disproportionately large number of UASCs in comparison with other local authorities. Figure 3 below, illustrates the concentration of UASCs across local authorities in England in 2015, prior to the national transfer scheme.

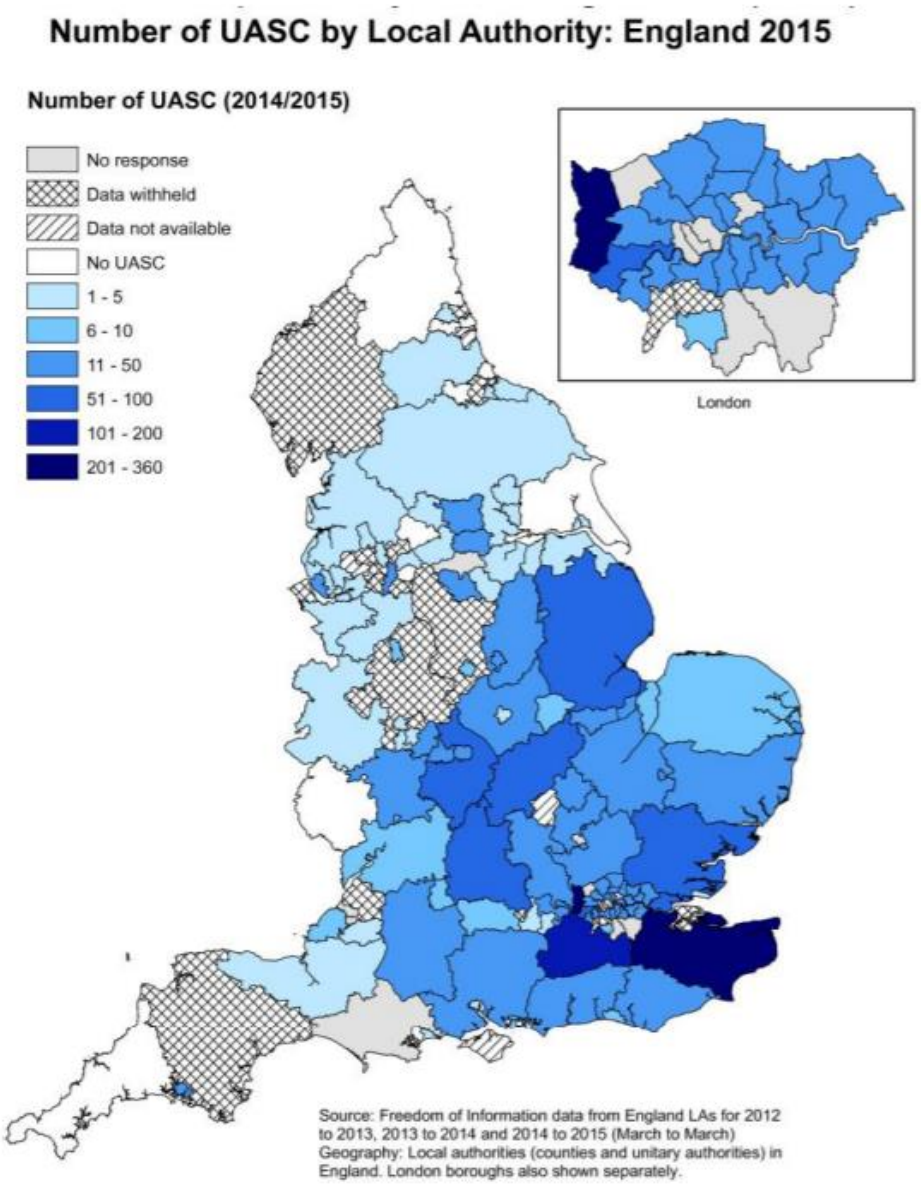


Figure 3 Number of UASC by local authority: England 2015 (Humphris and Sigona, 2016, p.6)

Under the national transfer scheme, which was introduced as an interim transfer protocol in 2016, the government allowed for UASCs to be transferred from one local authority to another, where there may be greater capacity. Government documentation states that the national transfer scheme is:

> *… intended to ensure that any participating local authority does not face a disproportionate responsibility in accommodating and looking after unaccompanied children…simply by virtue of being a point of arrival of a*

disproportionate number of unaccompanied children. The scheme is based on the principle that no local authority should be asked to look after more UASC than 0.07% of its total child population.

(Home Office and Department for Education, 2018, p.3)

In addition to looking after unaccompanied children through the transfer scheme, local authorities may take responsibility for those who arrive on a more *ad hoc* basis. The Association of the Directors of Children's Services (ADCS, 2016) refers to this as the 'lorry stop lottery', whereby asylum seekers enter the UK clandestinely, often in the backs of lorries, and are discovered at a particular point of the journey. Whilst local authorities are in theory able to plan for the arrival of unaccompanied minors through the National Transfer Scheme and through other formal arrangements such as the Dubs Amendment Children[2], 'lorry stop' arrivals[3] are often sporadic and unpredictable and local authorities may have to respond immediately upon the presentation of an unaccompanied minor in the relevant jurisdiction.

During my fieldwork, I spent time with unaccompanied minors who had travelled to the UK and were seeking, or had sought, asylum. The demographics of this cohort were broadly similar to national trends; all were male (in 2017, only 11% of unaccompanied minors in the UK were female, and this percentage has remained steady for some years) (Refugee Council, 2019a, p.11), and most were aged 16+ at the point of arrival in the UK (in 2018, 74% of unaccompanied children in the UK were aged 16-17, which is broadly similar to other years) (Refugee Council, 2019b). I conducted research with young men from Eritrea, Somalia, Kurdistan (Iran and Iraq), Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, and Albania. In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I introduce some of these young men and provide further information. Figure 4 below shows national trends regarding initial asylum decisions of unaccompanied children aged 17 and under in the UK:

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
2018	1,327	771	44	2	319	1	190
2017	1,454	817	36	2	386	2	211
2016	1,656	502	50	14	828	2	260
2015	1,568	357	18	38	809	0	346
2014	988	418	9	23	380	4	154

Figure 4 : Initial asylum decisions on children aged 17 and under (Refugee Council, 2019b, p.3)

[2] Dubs Amendment Children are those brought to the UK through Section 67 of the Immigration Act (2016), which required the Government to 'make arrangements to relocate to the United Kingdom and support a specified number of unaccompanied refugee children from other countries in Europe' (CCLC., 2017)

[3] It is difficult to gain reliable statistics on number and trends regarding so-called 'lorry-stop' arrivals. Whilst police forces do collect data for clandestine entries into the country, these are not routinely published (BBC News, 2019)

Figure 5, below, however, refers to those unaccompanied children who have reached aged 18 by the time of their initial asylum decision and this shows a much higher refusal rate than for those whose decisions are made when they are under 18:

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
2018	824	299	29	2	0	3	491
2017	586	307	12	1	0	1	265
2016	295	118	6	1	1	2	167
2015	362	63	1	3	0	0	295
2014	282	69	1	0	0	2	210

Figure 5 Initial asylum decisions on children who have reached aged 18 (Refugee Council, 2019b, p.3)

By the time I was exiting the field, some of the young men I knew had reached 18 years. For those who had been denied refugee status, this was a time of great uncertainty and worry. In some cases, the Home Office had begun the process of removal from the UK including detention for immigration purposes. The experiences of former unaccompanied minors removed from the UK is beyond the scope of this thesis: it is covered to some extent in the ESRC-funded project 'Becoming Adult' (https://becomingadult.net/). This thesis focuses on the experiences of integration of a relatively small cohort of unaccompanied minors in a city in southern England.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE PROJECT

My fieldwork began in January 2017. In the lead up to this time, headlines emanating from major newspapers referred to a 'crisis' of migrants reaching European shores (Berry et al., 2016). The scale of displacement globally has brought attention to the plight of forced migrants fleeing the violence of war, poverty and oppression. Whilst the vast majority of forced migrants remain within the majority world, the arrival on European shores of substantial numbers has forced a shift in response from European governments. This includes the government of the United Kingdom, which has responded to the concentration of unaccompanied minors in Kent in particular, with an unprecedented policy of dispersal across the UK. Unaccompanied minors are being sent to areas of the UK which may previously have had very little experience of immigration let alone the specific needs and experiences of those seeking asylum. This is all within a political-economic context of austerity, where local authorities have seen major cuts to their funding (Hastings et al., 2015).

The research was necessary in order to gain important knowledge of the subjective experiences of unaccompanied minors from an inter-disciplinary perspective. In the UK,

numbers of unaccompanied minors remain relatively low in comparison with some countries such as Pakistan or Turkey. Indeed, numbers of unaccompanied minors are relatively low in the UK in comparison with other European states such as Germany or Italy. Nonetheless, in the years leading up to the fieldwork in 2017, the number of unaccompanied minors was rising in the UK and unprecedented developments in terms of dispersal meant the landscape of provision for these young people in positions of vulnerability was in some cases new and unfamiliar. In addition to this, whilst there is widespread recognition of the agency of children in their lives and in the lives of those around them (Prout and James, 1997), developmental and universal models of childhood are tenacious, particularly in regard to unaccompanied minors. This is evidenced particularly with age determination and asylum decision-making, but it also manifested in day-to-day experiences for the young people. What is needed, therefore, is further research that engages with the young people on their own terms, considers participants as experts in their own lives and makes use of conceptual frameworks more appropriate to the fluidity and heterogeneity of lives of unaccompanied minors, rather than predetermined and outmoded models of universal development. Understandings from this thesis contribute to a body of literature relating to the experiences of unaccompanied minors (e.g. Bloch et al., 2014; Humphris and Sigona, 2016). In addition, the focus on integration arrives at an important time in the UK and globally, as populist and exclusionary voices gain traction in popular discourse and legislative agendas. This thesis serves as a voice for young people all too frequently marginalised and excluded, who have a right to participation and to safety in the UK.

RESEARCH AIMS

The research develops understandings of integration as a daily practice and as experienced by unaccompanied minors in the asylum system. As such, it does not focus primarily on 'top-down', policy-led strategies of integration although these remain relevant. Rather, it is concerned with understandings of integration from the point of view of the young men themselves. It enquires into, for instance, the young men's relationships with their peers, with adults around them, with the asylum system and with children's services. The aim is to construct knowledge and understanding regarding the agency of young men subject to immigration control as well as other coercive structures. In addition, it locates the young men within a context of policy and practices from front-line service providers, focusing on the daily practices of integration in relation to the material and non-material world.

Located firmly within a qualitative, interpretivist tradition, this thesis acknowledges the requirement, advanced in Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2018), that the call to action is 'a

meaningful and important outcome of inquiry processes' (p.134). I expand more upon this in Chapter 3 of this thesis. It is important to state here, however, that, in this thesis, I consciously and deliberately focus on the lived experiences of people who are frequently rendered silent. Unaccompanied minors are all-too-often denied a voice, in society and in decision-making processes, by virtue of their minority and immigration statuses; this thesis aims to engage politically in solidarity with unaccompanied minors and with asylum-seekers more generally.

This thesis is multi-disciplinary in nature, drawing from literature and methods across the social sciences, most notably anthropology and sociology. It fits within the theoretical position on childhood referred to originally as the 'new sociology of childhood' (James and Prout, 1990), which articulated the need for a recognition of the period of childhood, distinct from biological immaturity, as a social construction and for the need for children to be seen as 'active in the construction and determination of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live' (Prout and James, 1997, p.8). I draw from a wealth of literature which explores constructions and experiences of childhood in the majority world, including Klocker (2007), Montgomery (2001, 2007, 2008) and Boyden and Hart (2007). I engage with theories of agency and childhood as advanced by scholars such as Lee (2001) and Oswell (2012) and I contribute to research specifically concerning unaccompanied minors such as that of Crawley (2009, 2010, 2011) and Bloch et al. (2014).

I make an original contribution to academic knowledge through a research process that included a sustained, daily engagement with young men seeking asylum, through my focus on shifting relationships and through my regard for the specificity of place as a mediating factor in the young men's experiences. Methodologically, I have drawn on data captured using methods that were responsive and fluid, reflecting the realities of the daily lives of the young men. I thus offer unique and significant knowledge regarding the contextual and relational natures of the agency of young men subject to immigration control.

This thesis is, of course, limited in scope and does not engage specifically with young asylum seekers in families, nor significantly with those young people who are not recognised as children at the point of which they arrive in the UK. There is scope for further work regarding the continuing experiences of former unaccompanied minors as they shift from the care and control of childhood services into life as an adult refugee. Similarly, the experiences of those young people who are denied refugee status but remain, under the radar, in the UK, is relatively unchartered territory.

This thesis is comprised of 9 chapters, including this introduction. I introduce each chapter briefly below.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapters 2 and 3 form the conceptual frameworks around agency and integration respectively. Chapter 4 presents the methodology of the research, addresses ethical issues, and provides details of fieldwork. Chapters 5-8 are empirical and analytical chapters; the analysis is progressive, with Chapter 8 forming a key discussion chapter in answer to the research questions, that centre on the concepts of agency and integration. Chapter 9 is the conclusion.

Chapter 2 maps out key debates within the sociological tradition concerning agency and its relationship to structure and builds upon dominant models of childhood found within the social sciences. The new paradigm of childhood studies, epitomised in the work of Prout and James (1990) is fundamental to the conceptual framework employed in this thesis. This chapter builds on this paradigm, probing into the nature of children's agency in contexts of seeking asylum alone. I suggest that it is advantageous to understand agency as relational and contextual, rather than as a property of an individual. Such a conceptualisation, I argue, helps understanding of the nuances and shifts in the young men's experiences as they navigate daily life.

Chapter 3 reviews relevant theoretical literature, and the processes and understandings of integration in order to construct a conceptual framework whereby one can understand the practices of the young men and of the relevant adults in their lives. This chapter is part historical, exploring the contrasting histories of assimilationism and multiculturalism with relevance to the UK, followed with more recent developments towards narratives of community cohesion. I build on this with literature specific to the integration of refugees, which is employed to facilitate understandings of experiences and practices of integration and then give consideration to conceptual work regarding the integration of unaccompanied minors.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodology employed in this project, commencing with the research questions, which draw on the three broad themes of agency, childhood and integration. It sets out the details of the fieldwork, outlining the processes of collaboration with organisations, the gaining of access and the range of methods employed. The chapter situates the study broadly within the qualitative tradition, as a 'situated activity' consisting of a 'set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible; (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.4). This chapter also sets out the ethical processes required for this thesis and I also write reflexively about my relationship with the young men and other participants.

Chapter 5 is a rich, descriptive, ethnography that focuses on one street, Marlowe Street, in the fieldwork city of Rothport. This chapter serves to introduce the key themes and tensions explored throughout the thesis, including relationship to place, ambition and aspiration, and

irregularity. This street was particularly key to the experiences of so many of the young men with whom I spent time during the fieldwork months and I also explore my own sense of home in the field in and around Marlowe Street.

Chapter 6 is the second empirical chapter in this thesis and deals with the regulatory structures of asylum and immigration. In this chapter, I provide contextual understanding to young men's experiences of seeking asylum in the UK, outlining a complex legal system layered with domestic, EU and international law and precedent. I then present a series of ethnographic material relating to key facets of participant experiences of seeking asylum. In the remainder of the chapter, I address the issue of 'credibility', which is central to any decision to grant or refuse leave to remain (Carver, 2019).

In Chapter 7, I address the ambivalence in the relationship between care and control as performed through key structures in the quotidian experiences of participants; these structures are children's services, accommodation and formal education. I describe and seek to present my understandings, not only of policies and frameworks of care around the young men, but also the ways in which these are understood, implemented and negotiated by relevant frontline service providers. Much of the discussion within this chapter centres on the adaptations required by key personnel in learning to support young men whose life stories were very different to those children who had been raised in the UK, and where the dichotomies of child-adult are most apparent. The relationship of the support workers to their UASC clients is particularly illuminating, demonstrating an affection and continuity that proved crucial to the wellbeing and the integration of the young men. Through the domains of children's services, accommodation and formal education, I identify the young men's responses to the structures in which they were held; these responses varied considerably by individual and also as the contexts around the young men shifted.

Chapter 8 is the key discussion chapter in this thesis, which pulls together the conceptual frameworks of agency and integration, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively, with the empirical material set out in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Here I elicit key theoretical and empirical contributions of the thesis as the discussion reveals young men making choices and enacting these decisions even in contexts that are hugely restrictive. In some cases, these were young men reacting to day-by-day uncertainties, ensconced in short-term survival and self-reliance. In other cases, as leave to remain was granted entailing a period of certainty, the young men acted to pursue longer term aspirations.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis, and argues that it is helpful to understand integration in relation to daily life; integration, for my participants, related to relationships on a day-to-day basis,

friends and acquaintances with whom they would spend time, with whom they would engage in activities and with whom they would socialise in public spaces. What is also clear, especially from relevant professionals supporting the young men, is that integration is highly normative; there was ‘good integration’ and there was ‘bad integration’. These paths, and their varying architecture, were the subject of much ‘steering’, and in some cases prohibition, on the part of professionals. Chapter 9 also draws attention to the salience of relationships amongst the young men and between the young men and the relevant adults in their lives. I draw together discussions centring on the relationships of the young men to trajectories of safety, belonging and success (Kohli, 2011). I also make recommendations for policy and practice and outline the contributions of my research to existing scholarship. I also discuss the limitations of study and suggest an agenda for future research.

CHAPTER 2: UNACCOMPANIED MINORS CHILDHOOD AND AGENCY

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the lived experiences of unaccompanied minors in the UK and is concerned with how the integration process is managed by the young men themselves. Through fieldwork in a city I have named Rothport, I sought to construct knowledge of how young men exercise agency in relation to the integration process, with a recognition that unaccompanied minors are social agents and thus active in the determination of their own lives and in the societies in which they are (Prout and James, 1997).

A young man categorised as 'UASC' embodies a discursive grouping within two structures of regulation: that of 'asylum seeker' and that of 'child' (Giner, 2007). Dominant social constructions of childhood position children as inherently vulnerable and in need of protection (Piaget, 1955, 1959; Parsons, 1971). Contrastingly, structures of regulation surrounding forced migration reflect a hostility towards asylum seekers within society and hinder the integration of asylum seekers (Mulvey, 2010). This thesis is interested in the ways in which unaccompanied minors exercise agency within such contradictory structural constraints. This chapter serves to critically review the literature relevant to this endeavour; it forms an exploration of the concept of agency as pertinent to the lived experiences of unaccompanied minors in the UK in relation to integration. In so doing, it offers up a conceptual framework from which fieldwork findings can be understood.

Firstly, in this chapter I chart the evolution of the concepts of structure and agency and their relationship within the discipline of sociology. Secondly, I consider the dominant social constructions of childhood and the emergence of the so-called new paradigm of childhood studies (James and Prout, 1990), which informs the direction of this thesis. Thirdly, I draw upon empirical studies of majority world childhoods to probe further into the nature of agency and to problematise theories of child agency. I conclude with a focus on the implications for study and an outline of the conceptual framework built in this chapter, integrating the thinking around assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Lee, 2001), with an understanding of agency that is embedded in relationship.

STRUCTURE/AGENCY

In order to establish my understanding of both the concepts, I outline here the major contributions from the field of sociology relating to structure and agency. Agency is often juxtaposed to structure within sociology and, in its loosest formation, may be considered as a synonym for action, 'emphasising the undetermined nature of human action, as opposed to the alleged determinism of structural theories' ('agency' in Scott, 2014). More specifically, it is a concept employed within the social sciences to 'imply the capacity for willed (voluntary) action' (ibid).

Structure as Social Facts

The concept of societal structures as somehow constraining human social action is foundational to early sociology. Durkheim (2013a) stressed the necessity of understanding social life in terms of an historical perspective: that is, 'every individual is born into an already existing society, which moulds his own development' (Giddens, 1972, p.33). This was in contrast to utilitarian philosophy of the day, which interpreted 'human social action in terms of a-temporal concepts of utility and the pursuit of self-interest' (Giddens, 1972, p.2). Individuals are born into a social and historical world in which they are but one component of a whole system of social relationships (ibid). This social world, according to Durkheim, was comprised of social facts, which form a 'compelling and coercive power' on the individual (Durkheim, 2013a, p.52). Whilst an individual may not necessarily be aware of the constraints upon herself, any attempt to resist social facts, to 'go against the grain', will be met with coercion (Durkheim, 2013a, p.52). Durkheim defined social facts as follows:

> *A social fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or, which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations* (Durkheim, 1901, p.59).

Social facts are therefore obligatory in character, whereby the individual's membership of the larger group enforces human conduct (Giddens, 1972). Such social facts form the structures of modern society, according to Durkheim, which is recognisable in part by the division of labour in society (2013a). Whereas traditional societies were marked by a 'simple, segmental structure, consisting of aggregates of family or clan groups', modern society is more complex and socially differentiated, prompting economic interdependence between producers (Giddens, 1972). Advanced societies have an 'organic' solidarity (ibid) whereby specialist functions of society coalesce as an organism dependent upon reciprocal relationships (Giddens, 1972). Such functionalist thinking, which views society as a system of complex and interdependent

parts, necessarily emphasises structure over and above human agency; human lives are guided by social structure, resulting in relatively stable patterns of behaviour (Macionis and Plummer, 2012).

Values, Norms and Social Order

Within functionalist thinking, collectively held beliefs provide a form of social 'glue', which tempers individual self-interest and produces a cohesiveness to society (Layder, 2006). This approach is found in the work of Parsons (1937, 1951), who argues that shared values, expressed as norms, produce an orderliness to society (Layder, 2006). For example, the value of 'family', produces the norm of behaviour that the 'mother' and 'father' should care for the children within a nuclear family unit (ibid). Parsons (1937) emphasises the importance of macro elements of society as against micro elements and stresses the power of the social system to direct individuals' social behaviour (Layder, 2006). The concept of social role is particularly important, as it is through this that the individual establishes a connection to the overarching social system (Layder, 2006). Through socialisation, children are inculcated into particular roles, for example, the female role, thereby internalising patterns of behaviour and values that are considered moral and appropriate by society as a whole (Layder, 2006).

The danger of functionalist thought, as above, is that the structural emphases can invoke charges of determinism. For example, Garfinkel (1967) and Blumer (1986) have argued that Parson's (1937, 1951) theory of socialisation presumes a passive assimilation of roles, with little attention to the creative capacities of individuals (Layder, 2006). In addition to this, Giddens (1976) has suggested that structural approaches focus too much on social reproduction thus neglecting social production: i.e. the bending and reinvention of norms and expectations (Layder, 2006). The theory of structuration, advanced by Giddens (1976, 1979, 2013) attempts to bridge this dualism between structure and agency; whilst avoiding the overt determinism of structural approaches, it also refutes absolute voluntarism of unlimited free will.

Structuration

The main proposition in Giddens' theory of structuration is that structure and agency feed into one another cyclically; 'every act which contributes to the reproduction of a structure is also an act of production and as such may initiate change by altering the structure at the same time as it reproduces it' (Giddens, 1979, p.69). Whilst sociology has been divided along broad divisions (structure vs. agency, macro vs. micro, and society vs. the individual), Giddens (1984) advocates a cyclical understanding whereby structure is intrinsically intertwined with action and vice versa (Layder, 2006). He is thus straddling the divide between social production, which refers to the ways in which social life is created by individuals engaged in social practices, and social reproduction, which is concerned with how social life becomes routinised (ibid).

Key to this framing is the concept of *practices*, which refers to the way in which people interact with others and draw upon *resources*, such as knowledge of language or acceptable modes of engaging with others. These resources are shared socially (ibid). However, our actions in drawing on these resources vary due to the uniqueness of personality and circumstances of the actor (ibid). Therefore:

> *social practices reflect the ability of humans to modify the circumstances in which they find themselves, while simultaneously recreating the social conditions (practices, knowledge, resources) which they inherit from the past.* (ibid, p.166)

Giddens (2013) refers to this as the 'recursive nature of social life' (p.xxiii). Structure is understood here as both the medium and outcome of social activity (Giddens, 1979). We act with intention by drawing on rules and resources as a medium of our actions. However, because the value of such rules and resources is endorsed through usage, they also form the outcome of actions (Layder, 2006). Human beings, Giddens (2013) argues, possess a level of consciousness over which they have some control. He refers to this as practical and discursive consciousness (ibid). On this level of consciousness, actors have the capacity for reflexive monitoring of their own and others' activity, thus permitting a flexible response to changing circumstances (Layder, 2006).

All human action presupposes the existence of a degree of power on the part of the individual (ibid). The extent of one's power, in relation to another individual, is context-dependent and informed by the resources each party has available to them (ibid). However, power relationships are never zero-sum; subordinates, Giddens argues, are never entirely powerless; there are:

> *… alterations in the balance of power over time and in changing circumstances as a result of the attempts of subordinate groups to use the (sometimes meagre) resources at their disposal* (ibid, p.170)

People are never, therefore, completely at the mercy of social structures beyond their control (ibid). The concept of structure is used with some specificity here. Whereas, in structural functionalism, structure may be used interchangeably with the term system, to refer to institutions of society at a macro level, Giddens (2013) distinguishes between macro level systems and the rules and resources, used in individual activity at a micro level. It is the latter he refers to as structures (ibid). In this schema, rules can be codified (such as the rules of promotion within a bureaucratic organisation) or informal (rules pertaining to eye contact during conversation, for example) (Layder, 2006). Resources can be allocative, which refers to

material resources such as land or money. They can also be authoritative, which are non-material and may include, for example, status or hierarchical position (ibid). Taken together, structures are not merely limiting constraints on individual and collective action; they are enabling and have transformative power (ibid).

Sociological approaches that focus solely on structures of constraint provide inadequate conceptual tools for understanding the lived experiences of unaccompanied minors, who demonstrate a capacity for action, reflection and who are actively engaged in making meaning in their own lives and taking action to improve their situation. Yet, on the other side of the divide, approaches that overemphasise the creative capacities and freedoms of the individual risk minimising the power of, for example, the asylum system in determining to a large extent the individual's future. With this in mind, the dualism of structure and agency put forward in structuration theory begins a conceptual approach that can accommodate action within systems of regulation and the phenomenon of change. From this juncture, I seek to investigate the concept of agency further, critiquing in particular the delineation of agency as a property of individuals, which is rather limiting for the purposes of this thesis. Prior to this, however, it is necessary to investigate the conceptual work concerning agency, specifically in regard to childhood and children.

CHILDREN AND AGENCY

The 19th century produced an extensive body of knowledge about children and childhood (Prout and James, 1997). During this time, psychologists and other social scientists engaged in the systematic study of children, through which the concept of childhood as a distinct phase in the human life cycle became established in Western thought (ibid). Subsequently in the 20th century, extensive 'technologies of knowledge', such as psychometric testing and longitudinal studies, cemented this theoretical space (ibid, p.8). This has led to a particularly Western conception of childhood being applied to all children, regardless of context (ibid). Whilst early anthropologists such as Mead (1928) and Benedict (1934) took children as their subject matter, the emphasis was on 'children as future adults or children as the passive recipients of adult care and attention' (Montgomery, 2001, loc.372). Psychological models of child development have dominated much knowledge regarding children (Prout and James, 1997). In the text below, I first outline the key tenets of the developmental model of childhood, followed by related theories of childhood socialisation. This serves as a foundational legacy from which more critical studies of childhood have emerged.

Models of Development and Socialisation

The period of childhood is of sociological interest, according to Durkheim, as a period of growth, which leads teleologically to a full, individuated status of adulthood (2013b). This period of growth was necessarily marked by a state of incompleteness

> *… he grows because he is incomplete, because he is weak, because there is still something he lacks* (Durkheim, 2013b, p.255)

The state of adulthood is accorded a *fullness*, with childhood, therefore, a state of '*becoming,* an incipient being, a person in the process of formation' (ibid, p.256, italics in original). Consequently, the child is in need of 'a wonderful environment of careful attention, of consideration, of favourable circumstances and protective influences' (ibid, p.256). Childhood is thus understood as distinctly separate from the state of adulthood, and as qualitatively different and subordinate to the fullness and stability of the adult state. As a consequence, the child should be separated spatially and protected from the adult realm.

The dominant approach to understanding childhood has been through the 'developmental model' provided by the discipline of psychology and based on the proposition of natural growth (Prout and James, 1997). This model is premised upon the factuality of the child on a biologically determined path towards full human status of adulthood (ibid). In this model, the irrational child, with simplicity of thought, moves towards rational adulthood, with complexity of thought (ibid). Biological development is connected with social development, as children's play and language are interpreted, not as meaningful in their own right, but as prefiguring future participation in the adult world (ibid). This model is epitomised in the influential work of psychologist Jean Piaget (1955, 1959). Piaget (ibid) structured childhood along seven pre-determined stages, which culminated in the attainment of logical competence as a marker of adult completion (Prout and James, 1997) This model carries with it two major assumptions that permeate both discourse and practice; first, that children are a natural rather than social phenomena and secondly, their maturation is an inevitable process (James et al., 1998). As such, it is an evolutionary model where individuals are 'realisations of what was bio-genetically inherent' (Jenks, 1996, p.36). Secondly, childhood is universal:

> … *the child, as the bodily manifestation of cognitive development from infancy to adulthood can represent all children* (Prout and James, 1997, p.10)

Despite vast social and cultural diversity, official versions of childhood are premised upon the biological and psychological demarcation from the rational space of adulthood (Boyden, 1997). This developmental model, as advanced by Piaget (1955, 1959) and others, continues to influence many social practices around children (Prout and James, 1997). It is pivotal to

Western understandings of appropriate child-rearing (e.g. Urwin, 1985) and highly influential in the domain of education (e.g. Walkerdine, 1984).

The concept of socialisation, which emerged during the 1950s, inherited the premises of developmental theory around the naturalness of childhood, its universality and irrationality (Prout and James, 1997). Within structural functionalist accounts, including the aforementioned work of Parsons (1937, 1951, 1971) socialisation was the process whereby children learnt to become adult members of society (Prout and James, 1997). Through processes of socialisation, children are gradually made aware of social conventions, through the instructions of their parents and other adults; pre-social children learn to become adult, full members of society (Lee, 2001). There is thus an implicit binarism, inherited from developmental theories and absorbed in classical socialisation, which posits that child as asocial, irrational and incompetent (Prout and James, 1997). Through the vagaries of socialisation, the passive child is acted upon until accredited with full socialisation:

> *The child is portrayed like the laboratory rate, as being at the mercy of external stimuli: passive and conforming* (ibid, p.11).

Developmental and socialisation models ensure positions of dependency, passivity and marginalization for children. Below, I draw attention to the phenomenon of age assessment within the asylum system. An understanding of this system illustrates effectively the contextuality of childhood, which refutes the presumed universality of developmental and socialisation models.

Developmental Childhood and the Asylum System

I focus here on the asylum system in relation to the overall theme of agency, as it directs attention to an important context of this thesis, which is concerned with the agency and experiences of young men seeking asylum. As such, I promote an understanding of the asylum system as a structure of considerable constraint, forming the primary control on the lives of the young men. It is important, therefore, to foreground an understanding of the asylum system in order to examine and learn from the experiences of unaccompanied minors within this system, and to be attentive to the continuing relevance of agency within extremely limiting circumstances.

Existing research concerning unaccompanied children in the asylum system demonstrates the tenacity of developmental models of childhood, in spite of considerable challenge from the discipline of childhood studies in the last twenty years or more. This is particularly evident in the phenomenon of age determination, whereby the Home Office subjects a young person to assessment in attempt to determine the veracity of their claim to minority status. Figure 6 below,

provides the most recent statistics from the Home Office[4], demonstrating under 1/3 of UASC claims were age disputed by the Home Office, and that over half of these were determined to be over 18

Figure 6 UASC Claims and Age Disputes (Home Office, 2019b)

	Year ending June 2018	Year ending June 2019
No. UASC claims made	**2,523**	**3,496**
% dispute/claims	**30%**	**27%**
% disputes resolved as under 18	46%	41%
% disputes resolved as 18+	54%	59%

At times, when a young person first applies for asylum, the Home Office may doubt his or her claim to be under 18. In such cases, when there is insufficient, reliable documentation to verify the age claim, the Home Office may conduct an initial assessment based on appearance and demeanour (Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2017). Home Office policy states:

> *You must treat the claimant as an adult if their physical appearance and demeanour **very strongly suggests that they are 25 years of age or over.*** (Home Office, 2019a, p.12, emphasis in original)

The following are listed as potential indicators of age:

- *height*
- *build*
- *facial features, including facial hair, skin lines or folds, tone and weathering*
- *voice, including tone, pitch and expression (particularly in respect of males)*

(Home Office, 2019a, p.13)

In addition to Home Office assessments, unaccompanied minors may also have their age assessed through the local authority responsible for their care. In this case, statutory guidance dictates that:

> *Age assessments should only be carried out where there is reason to doubt that the individual is the age they claim. Age assessments should not be a routine part of a local authority's assessment of unaccompanied or trafficked children.*

(Department for Education, 2017b, pp.13-14)

[4] This only reflects Home Office disputes, not those of the local authority concerned. Therefore, the real number is likely to be higher.

Best practice guidance for social workers to conduct age assessments was published in 2015 and states:

> *Social workers, by nature of their education, experience and specialist skills in working with and interviewing vulnerable young people and children, are uniquely positioned to undertake holistic assessments.*
>
> (ADCS, 2015, p.3)

In comparison with assessments conducted by the Home Office, local authority assessments are intended to be more holistic: informed by spending time with the young person and getting to know them. One's age as an unaccompanied minor claiming asylum in the UK is of vital importance. It can determine access to support and education and will also determine the interim system of protection afforded to asylum-claimants during the processing of a claim (Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2017). Recognition as a child will also guard against detention and removal in the short-term. As such, the result of an age determination will control, to a large extent, the future experiences of the young person seeking asylum.

Age assessments are particularly controversial (ADCS, 2015; Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2017). Margins of error in medical age determination can be as much as five years and there are numerous difficulties to arriving at a fixed determination (Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2017). Subjective judgements based primarily on aesthetics ignore the varieties of economic and political contexts from which asylum applicants are fleeing. Unlike conceptions of childhood in the minority world, majority world contexts offer little incentive to remaining childlike and dependent, and children assume so-called adult roles quickly. In addition, the process of fleeing country of origin and claiming asylum and indeed the circumstances motivating the decision to flee in the first place inevitably affect the physical appearance and demeanour of young people who are claiming asylum (Crawley, 2009). Crawley's (2009) research found; 'there is evidence that much of what currently passes for 'age assessment', particularly at screening units and ports but also among some social workers, legal representatives, immigration judges and other practitioners, is essentially a rapid visual assessment, which concludes that an individual *doesn't look like a child* ' (ibid, p.94, italics in original). Practices within the asylum system, therefore, regularly resort to preconceived and culturally specific prescriptions of what constitutes a legitimate child; conformity to such a prototype may be seen as a pre-requisite for recognition as a child.

The designation of childhood as innocent and carefree is historically and culturally bound to social and economic contexts of capitalist countries of Europe and the US (Boyden, 1997; Hart and Tyrer, 2006; Crawley, 2011). Crawley (2011) found that children in the asylum system who

articulated experiences of childhood that contradicted societal expectations were likely to be disbelieved (Crawley, 2011). In particular, the UK asylum system failed to acknowledge the realities of children's political engagement. Whilst children are assumed to be apolitical, because they are not old enough to vote, research has shown that many asylum-seeking children are directly involved with issues that affect them, their families and their communities and are active in effecting change (Crawley, 2006, 2007, 2011). The articulation of such lived experiences often led to disbelief on the part of the Home Office that the speaker actually was a child. (Crawley, 2011). Similarly, children applying for asylum who demonstrate sexual agency are also routinely disbelieved by the Home Office (Crawley, 2011). Societal norms in the UK as in other Western countries assume sex to be the exclusive realm of adults and there is a commonly held belief that children are asexual beings (Crawley, 2011). Asylum claims may reveal children who have had sex (through necessity, by choice or as abuse). Such experiences are presented, Crawley argues, as a crime not just against the individual child but against the institution of childhood itself (Crawley, 2011). Just as the disclosure of political engagement counts against the child claiming asylum, so do experiences of sexual activity; to the extent that a child claiming asylum who is pregnant or who has children of her own, is taken as ultimate 'proof' that she is not really a child.

The phenomenon of age assessment in the UK asylum system reveals the continuing influence of developmental models that position childhood as a natural, biological, universal stage of lifespan. As such, we can think of age assessment as part of the structure of the asylum system, that poses considerable constraint and force upon young people seeking asylum. Research into such a practice problematises the distinct binary of child/adult revealing practical difficulties in determining age with any degree of precision. These may be due to difficulties in communication, lack of knowledge, or the wide margins of error of, and ethical objections to, medical determinations (Sauer et al., 2016). In addition to this, the entrenched legacy of developmental childhood negates the opportunity for young people to relay their experiences truthfully. Experiences that transcend, or indeed contradict, Western models of childhood as apolitical, asocial and carefree are either disbelieved, or taken as evidence that the young person is merely pretending to be a child (Crawley, 2010, 2011).

Challenges to this orthodoxy of childhood emerged in the 1970s and gained critical mass in the 1990s (Prout and James, 1997). This led, in part, to the development of a 'new sociology of childhood' (ibid), which is the subject of the text below. This considerably expands the conceptual space available from which to understand the experiences of unaccompanied minors as social actors.

Towards a New Sociology of Childhood

A turn away from positivism towards interpretivist approaches in the social sciences is marked with an emphasis on 'discovering the meanings that people attach to empirically observed phenomena in order to understand how they make sense of the world around them' (Elliot et al., 2016, no page). There was a concern within interpretivism for the problematisation of everyday life and the recognition of social reality as neither 'fixed, constant or unitary' (Prout and James, 1997, p.13). Consequently, this 'fostered an interest in children as social actors and childhood as a particular kind of social reality' (ibid., p.13). 'Childhood studies' emerged within a broader intellectual culture of critical deconstruction of dominant and hitherto taken-for-granted foundations. Meanwhile, interpretive sociologies generally began to stress the role played in the constitution of human society by creative, individual activity (Prout and James, 1997, p.16). In the 1970s, developments within psychology began to consider the role of social context in shaping children's development (Woodhead, 2009). The work of Vygotsky (1986), in particular, was employed to provide a countering narrative to universal stage theory, with a focus on child development as a product of specific economic, social and cultural contexts (Woodhead, 2013). This work prepared the foreground for the emergence of the new paradigm of childhood studies.

The central tenets of the new paradigm of childhood studies state that childhood, children's relationships and cultures are significant manifestations of the social world in their own right, rather than simply being of interest in terms of a trajectory towards rational adulthood (Prout and James, 1997, p.4). Within the new paradigm, childhood itself is understood as socially constructed; it is contextual rather than universal (ibid.). Within a broader interpretivist tradition, social reality is not fixed, constant or unitary, it is continuously created through the activities of social agents (ibid.). The orthodoxy of a universal childhood was challenged by the work of French historian Phillipe Ariès (Ariès, 1996). Aries (ibid.) argued that, beyond the dependence of infancy, children were not depicted in Medieval Europe and were not viewed as inherently separate from adults. Changes in Western European societies, including the emergence of formal and lengthy schooling for all children, produced a structural category of childhood that institutionalised childhood and thus separated it from the adult realm (Ariès, 1996; Prout and James, 1997). Aries' work was supported by early anthropological studies, such as Margaret Mead's (1928) study of adolescence in Samoa, which refuted orthodox conceptions of adolescence as a period of natural rebellion (Mead, 1928; Prout and James, 1997). The ideal of childhood as a time of dependency, education and play is specific to the minority world, middle and upper class, experience (Prout and James, 1997; Woodhead, 2013).

The new paradigm of childhood studies is summarised, according to Prout and James (1997), in six parts, as detailed in Figure 7 below:

Figure 7 Key Features of the new paradigm of childhood studies (Prout and James, 1997, p.8)

Key Features of the new paradigm of childhood studies

1) Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is a social construction; it 'is neither a natural nor a universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies.'
2) Like class, gender, or ethnicity, childhood is one variable of social analysis. The social world is composed of multiple childhoods; there is no one universal childhood.
3) 'Children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concerns of adults.'
4) Rather than passive recipients of structural constraints, children need to be seen 'as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live.'
5) Ethnography, 'allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research' and is, therefore, appropriate for the study of children.
6) The theory of double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1976) is applicable to the study of childhood. That is, 'to proclaim a new paradigm of childhood sociology is also to engage in and respond to the process of reconstructing childhood in society'

The new paradigm encapsulates directions of enquiry into the lives of children that broke free, to a great extent, from traditional theories based on Parsonian socialisation theory and Piagetian child development (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). Alternative conceptualisations of childhood, synthesised by Prout and James (1990), fuelled a growth in childhood studies research; the key tenets of the new paradigm have, to varying degrees, been embraced in this research (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). The importance of age as a social variable is also increasingly recognised across disciplines (ibid); for example, age has become a critical variable both in research and engagement with migration studies (Bhabha, 2018). For the purposes of this thesis, which investigates the agency and integration practices of unaccompanied minors, the new paradigm is a crucial springboard from which to develop understandings that privilege the voices and that acknowledge the active capacities of the young men.

There have been criticisms of the research broadly emanating from the new paradigm (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). In particular, scholars (e.g. Horton and Kraftl, 2005, 2006; Vanderbeck, 2007; James, 2010) have critiqued the volume of empirical studies of children's lives to the detriment of development on a theoretical level, although Mayall (2012), disputes this. In particular, whilst many empirical studies emphasise the agency of children and young people,

Bluebond-Langner and Korbin (2007, p.243) question the extent to which the such a focus on agency neglects children's vulnerabilities:

> *When we move away from a view of children as passive recipients of action and ascribe them agency and competency, or even when we shift weight to agency and away from children as developing beings in need of protection, what happens to vulnerability? How do we deal with our ethical and moral responsibilities to children and to others in the communities in which they live?*

Additionally, they ask questions regarding the *nature* of agency and what such agency entails for different children and young people:

> *What is less clear is the degree of agency, the impact of that agency, let alone the nature of that agency…*
>
> (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007, p.242)

With this in mind, the next section of this chapter problematises agency for children and young people, serving to further expand the conceptual framework underpinning this thesis.

PROBLEMATIZING AGENCY

Earlier in this chapter, I detailed the attempt, within structuration, to bridge the divide between structure and agency in sociological theory. Giddens (1972, 1979, 1984) proposed a dualism whereby structure and agency are intertwined and feed into one another. This reconciliation of concepts offers an important vehicle towards building a framework of agency with which to understand the integration practices of unaccompanied minors. As Prout and James (1997) state:

> *…some such view of how structure and agency complement each other seems to be an essential component in any new sociology of childhood.* (p.26)

Since Giddens, the structure/agency relationship within sociologies of childhood has undergone substantial elaboration and complexification (e.g. James et al., 1998; James and James, 2004). In this tradition, the recourse to Giddensian structuration has invoked a sociology of childhood concerned with the 'fundamental social relation between an individual agency and structural totality' (Oswell, 2012, p.50). What is problematic, however, is that the nature of agency itself is not explained (ibid). For instance, there is a failure to address questions of 'circulation, investment and accumulation' of agency within a context; instead children's agency is presented as a 'social universal':

> *…as if questions of its distribution, accumulation and unevenness were not central questions for empirical investigation, and as if agency simply fell on the shoulders of individuals…* (ibid, p.50).

The task, Oswell (ibid) continues, is to 'provide an analytics, which is able to explain agency in the context of contingent empirical realities' (p.50). In this section, I now turn to empirical studies of childhood from majority world contexts, which offer conceptual contributions to such an analytics. Firstly, I consider gradations of agency in varying contexts and relationships, with reference to Klocker's (2007) work with children in Tanzania. Secondly, I address questions surrounding agency, morality and victimhood, with a focus on Montgomery's (2001, 2007) insights from fieldwork with child sex workers in Thailand. Finally, I return to the theoretical challenge posed by Oswell (2012) above, employing concepts of assemblage and situational and partial agency (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Lee, 2001; Oswell, 2012)

Gradations of Agency

Drawing on the concept of 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973), Klocker (2007) proposes the adoption 'thickness' as a descriptor in relation to agency (Geertz, 1975; Klocker, 2007). Agency forms a continuum in terms of 'thickness' and 'thinness' where:

> *'thin' agency refers to decisions and everyday actions that are carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterised by few viable alternatives. 'Thick' agency is having the latitude to act within a broad range of options.* (ibid, p.85)

In her work with child domestic workers[5] in Tanzania, Klocker (ibid) employs gradations of the concept of agency as 'thin' and 'thick'. She found that age, gender, 'tribe' and poverty were all 'thinners' of Tanzanian girls' agency before, during and after their employment in CDW (Child Domestic Work) (ibid). In the Tanzanian context, the extent of inequitable power relations between adults and children is particularly pronounced. In addition, young people do not generally consider themselves to be particularly important decision-makers in their own lives and the status of being 'under my parents' implies a diminution of autonomy (ibid, p.86) Indeed, it is a strong sense of responsibility towards one's parents that often propels young people to migrate to the cities and seek employment within CDW as a means of fulfilling perceived duties towards their families.

Gender serves as a 'thinning' factor in relation to the agency of children engaged in CDW in Tanzania, as scarce family resources tend to be spent on the education of male children (it is

[5] *Child domestic workers (CDWs) are defined by UNICEF* (1999) *as those who are 'under the age of 18 who work in other people's households doing domestic chores, caring for children, and running errands, among other tasks' (p.83)*

assumed that girls will eventually leave the family home and join the households of their spouses' families and are therefore not considered as an investment) (ibid p.87). For the majority of girls who leave school at the end of statutory primary education, there are few options available to them in a context of limited resources and subsistence living. Because girls are usually socialised into a domestic role from an early age, the move into CDW feels natural for those who want to work outside the rural village (ibid, p.87). The 'tribal background' attributed to girls who traditionally enter CDW assumes stereotypical characteristics, such as subservience and submissiveness, which potential employers prefer (ibid., p.87). Assumptions of compliance and hard work have a thinning effect not only in terms of the girls' recruitment into CDW but also the expectations placed on them and the conditions to which they are subjected once in employment (ibid, p.89). Poverty is also a key factor for majority world children in terms of propelling them into employment at a young age (ibid, p.90).

Whilst agency is 'thinned' by categories such as age and gender, which overlap and reinforce each other this does not entail a lack of agency altogether (ibid). The girls engaged in CDW in Klocker's (ibid) research were clear they did not consider themselves to be mere objects; they were acting, Klocker argues, from a belief that the decision to enter and remain in CDW would 'produce the best possible outcome for themselves and their families' (ibid, p.91). As Klocker (ibid) states:

> *…focusing only on the downtrodden elements of the Tanzanian child domestic worker's character, her strength, her abilities, and knowledge are either overlooked, or considered insignificant in relation to context.* (ibid, p.91)

Thinking about agency in terms of gradations offers a conceptual means by which to acknowledge children as actors within varying contexts and avoids resorting to a zero-sum conception of 'all or nothing'. Below, I offer tentative explorations of gradations of agency with regards to unaccompanied minors in the UK.

Unaccompanied minors are separated from their parents or customary caregiver and are thus removed from the support of perhaps the most significant emotional relationship, which confers a vulnerability (Hopkins, 2008). They are located within popular discourses that construct all migrants as threats, particularly those 'least wanted' asylum seekers (Mulvey, 2010). In addition, as children, unaccompanied minors are necessarily granted a lower status than adults in terms of their capacity for decision-making. All of these serve the function of thinning agency. Language acquisition may also serve to thin agency, leading to communication difficulties that may prevent unaccompanied minors from disclosing information that may be integral to their well-being, such as experiences of abuse (Baillot et al., 2012). In addition, the culture of

disbelief at the heart of the asylum system, which is explored below, serves as a significant thinner of the agency of unaccompanied minors.

There is an abundance of research documenting cultures of disbelief and denial in the UK asylum system (e.g. Robinson, 1999; Crawley, 2011; Jubani, 2011) . Jubani's (2011) research on asylum screening found this process to be 'shaped by the criteria, values and influence of the immigration service subculture… informed by a meta-message of disbelief and deterrence' (ibid, p.88); immigration officers were trained to disbelieve and they operated with shared common narratives of 'legitimate' asylum claims and behaviours of individuals based on countries of origin and gender (ibid.). Similarly, Crawley (2010) found a widespread cynicism on the part of Home Office case-workers concerning the legitimacy of asylum applications with accusations of children 'turning on the waterworks' and 'pretending to be stupid' (ibid, p.164). This culture of disbelief is situated within a context of increasing restriction and punitive measures against asylum seekers generally, including the withdrawal of welfare support as a mechanism of immigration control (Crawley, 2011, p.1172).

One can identify age, gender, country of origin and cultures of disbelief as thinners of agency in the asylum system; it is within contexts of doubt and denial, suspicion and punition that unaccompanied minors negotiate their positions and relationships. Agentive capacities, in such contexts, are diminished but not extinguished. Research articulating the agency of unaccompanied minors in the asylum system has, for example, shed light on young people's use of silence and selective disclosure as a means of retaining autonomy (Kohli, 2006; Chase, 2010). In some cases, psychotherapeutic accounts attribute child refugee's silencing to an act of forgetting in order to survive loss (Melzak, 1992; Kohli, 2006). Kohli (2006) suggests an alternative understanding of silence as a means of holding on to some autonomy and as a part of healing. Kohli's (ibid.) research focuses on the interpretation of unaccompanied minors' silences by social workers, who sought to understand such silence as a complex agentive act with multiple meanings. It is worth noting, also, that Chase's (2010) work with unaccompanied minors addresses the issue of silence and selective disclosure. Chase (ibid.) concluded that selective disclosure was sometimes a tool used by unaccompanied minors to maintain some degree of control in otherwise oppressive contexts.

It is thus potentially useful to think of agency in relation to categories, positions and contexts that act as 'thinners' or 'thickeners' when reaching for new understandings of unaccompanied minors and practices on integration. In the text below, I elaborate on this inquiry into the nature of agency with attention to normative assumptions and the role of the victim.

Agency, Victimhood and Victimcy

As a counter-weight to traditional views of children as passive dependents, researchers within childhood studies have been keen to emphasise the competence of children and young people as social actors (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). Yet there is a tendency within this field to uncritically assume that children's exercise of agency necessarily contributes to positive change or improvement in their lives (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). Asad (2000) refers to a tendency within social research for agency to be equated with striving towards 'positive' moral goals. Such a tendency is challenged strongly in the work of Montgomery (2001), who conducted fieldwork with children in a small slum community in Thailand.

The children lived with their families and worked part-time as sex workers in order to help provide for their families (ibid). Due to the nature of the subject area, there has been limited involvement of academics outside of social work ~~of~~ (for?) social policy (ibid). The realities of child prostitution are inevitably those of immense harm being inflicted on children; the violence is psychological, social and physical (ibid). Inevitably, this provokes moral and ethical difficulties for Montgomery herself, who is cognisant of the harm being done to these children. Montgomery's (ibid.) position is to respect the wishes of the children to be treated with dignity and so not to expose the children nor the men purchasing sex (Schaeffer, 2002).

The children do not accept the labels of prostitute others ascribe to them and find ways to construct their work that strives to contain its harm. As Montgomery (2001) argues, they are using the little control they have to make their lives bearable. Some children acted as pimps for other children, reflecting an internal differentiation and hierarchy within the community (ibid). However, this phenomenon raises an interesting question: namely, does the concept of agency remain relevant even within the most exploitative of circumstances? Children who work as prostitutes are some of the most powerless in any society; the children in Montgomery's (ibid.) research were from extremely poor, insecure backgrounds with few viable economic alternatives available to them. On a macro level, the children in Montgomery's (ibid.) study are hugely constrained by poverty and are necessarily disadvantaged within a culture that marginalises children. Yet on a micro level, these children have latitude of action: in their relationships with each other, in their narratives of self and in their coping mechanisms outside of paid work. For example, the children communicated a narrative of self as fulfilling their filial duties in providing for their families, thus negating any moral opprobrium to the nature of their work (Montgomery, 2008). Others described their relationships with adult men as that of friendship, demonstrated by the giving of gifts and money to support the family; sex was understood as incidental to the relationship (ibid.).

The question of childhood agency in such contexts is intricately tied up with the concept of vulnerability. Indeed, there have been concerns that the focus on children's agency can neglect the vulnerabilities in children's lives (e.g. Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007; Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013). Bluebond-Langner and Korbin (2007) question:

> *When we move away from a view of children as passive recipients of action and ascribe them agency and competency, or even when we shift weight to agency and away from children as developing beings in need of protection, what happens to vulnerability? How do we deal with our ethical and moral responsibilities to children and to others in the communities in which they live?* (p.243)

To this end, probing the nature of vulnerability offers insights that illuminate the concept of agency in turn. The refusal of the children in Montgomery's (2001) fieldwork to accept status of victimhood contrasts with what Clark (2007) calls the 'homogenous, fixed 'vulnerables' ideal'. Clark problematises the use of 'vulnerables' in refugee programmes in Uganda, arguing that its use as a plural noun rather than an adjective reflects an essentialism that neglects the relational and contextual aspects of positions of vulnerability (ibid). This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, 'vulnerables' as a category omits the heterogeneity of the lives of those subsumed within this category; individuals may have characteristics of vulnerability in some circumstances, but not in others. Secondly, there is a permanence to the term 'vulnerables' that suggests a fixed state of being, irrespective of the contextual and relational aspects of vulnerability; such a 'fixedness' conceptually excludes the possibility of changes in circumstances and, therefore, a shift in position of vulnerability (ibid). In addition, such a 'fixedness' runs the risk of seeing vulnerability as an inherent quality and thereby draws attention away from the larger structure that produces vulnerability in the first place. Clark (ibid.) proposes instead the usage of 'vulnerable to…' to reflect a position of vulnerability in specific contexts and relationships. For example, the assumption of economic vulnerability of refugees needs to be contextualised within an international aid regime that requires destitution as a precondition of worthiness (ibid). Similarly, Clark (ibid.) notes some girls feeling unsafe walking alone in the forest near the refugee camp, signalling the 'contextual nature of physical vulnerability'; the girls were vulnerable to assault in certain locations (ibid, p.288).

One's position of vulnerability shifts in different relationships. Yet even within positions of vulnerability it would be misleading to assume a complete absence of agency. Indeed, Clark (ibid) notes that, in some cases, refugees may self-identify as 'vulnerable', for example, identifying as an unaccompanied minor although they have parents. Vulnerability can thus be politically useful for young people in order to meet their needs (ibid). Utas (2005) identifies this form of self-representation, in order to navigate highly uncertain and disempowering

circumstances, as ‘victimcy’. Whilst politically expedient in the short-term, this can contribute towards pathologising discourses, that position young people as powerless victims.

Conceptually, agency and vulnerability do not need to be mutually exclusive. A status as victim does not need to be permanent and all-encompassing. Klocker's (2007) image of agency as thinned and thickened alludes to this; there are contexts and relationships where one's agency is thinned to such an extent that it may make more sense to speak of victimhood rather than agency. Yet social lives are multifaceted, multi-relational and the contexts are shifting. Within the structures of the asylum system, such as the asylum interview, agency will be thinned to a great extent. Yet this does not necessarily entail that this individual is in the same position of vulnerability in all contexts. In some relationships, such as with peers or a safe and supportive foster placement, agency may be thickened. Where experiences of victimhood appear to be totalising, this may be more indicative of discursive representations, often for political ends (Pupavac, 2008). On a broader scale, there are political motivations for representing certain populations within a pathologising discourse of total victimhood, the effects of which are far from benign (Pupavac, 2008). Attention to the voices of unaccompanied minors, which is the aim of this thesis, may provide counter-narratives to such discourses.

The empirical work above has added complexities to the concept of agency in shifting contexts and relationships. In the text below, I return to theoretical examinations of agency that offer further clarification regarding relational and contextual understandings of agency.

Agency through Assemblage

A recognition of agency as relational and contextual helps to move our theoretical understanding on from the individual social agent (Oswell, 2012). Borrowing from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Lee (2001) argues against the idea of adult human completeness in contrast to child becomings. He states:

> *… humans, regardless of age, are constitutionally unfinished. They are always indebted to someone or something else, and this indebtedness open human life to adaptability and change* (p.114)

Life is thought of in terms of assemblages rather than completion. Thus, rather than understanding agency as a possession, fixed unchanging onto the person of the child, agency is best understood in terms of '*agencements'* or assemblages/arrangements:

> *... agency is always relational and never a property; it is always in-between and interstitial; and the capacity to do and to make a difference is necessarily dispersed across an arrangement.* (Oswell, 2012, p.270)

In this account, humans are continuously engaged in extension and borrowing, from media and from the world's resources (Lee, 2001). For example, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe the assemblage of the 'man AND horse'; the process of assembling the 'Man AND horse' changed the nature of the horse into a mount and the human into a rider. The same logic applies to the assemblage 'human AND horse AND plough', which enabled the production of surplus agricultural produce and prompted a relationship of interdependence between the rural and urban. Each assemblage is a form of stability that:

> *… lasts for a while, but through further encounters and possibilities, each assemblage can change and become something rather different, changing the characteristics and powers of its elements as it goes*. (Lee, 2001, p.115)

Thus, social life, for adults and children alike, is pictured as various shifting orders that are open to change; human life is viewed 'as an involvement in multiple becomings' (ibid, p.115).

How might such a conceptualisation of multiple becomings prove useful for my research? What are the resources, human and non-human, that unaccompanied minors employ in the exercise of agency? In what ways is this agency relational in terms of peer relationships in school, for example? How might the paraphernalia of adolescence form part of an assemblage and to what intent? How might this relate with other identities such as masculinity? Furthermore, how might peer networks, in person or through technology, be assembled in daily realities for unaccompanied minors. The concept of assemblage is particularly useful in terms of moving away from the idea of the social agent as a unified and bounded subject and may promote a rich understanding of the agency of unaccompanied minors in the UK. I expand further upon this in the text below, where I set out the implications for study following this conceptual framework.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDY

The literature reviewed in this chapter concerning structure, agency and childhood has informed the development of the research questions that constitute the central focus of this thesis. These are:

1. How do unaccompanied minors practise integration into British society and how are they agentive in doing so?
2. How is the integration of unaccompanied minors understood and addressed in the policy and practice of front-line service providers?

The literature reviewed to this point has revealed a theoretical base within social theory that focuses, in different guises, on the concepts of structure, agency and the relationship between the two. More often than not, we are presented with a continuum with different theories and ideologies placing varying degrees of weight towards either end. An overtly functionalist interpretation of the experiences of unaccompanied minors in the UK would certainly not be short of material. It is clear that these young people are situated within immense structural constraints, as demonstrated in the literature regarding age assessment in the asylum system. Yet it is problematic to accept outright determinism, for various reasons.

The emphasis within structural functionalism to understand social phenomena, including change, with reference solely to underlying structures is an inadequate theoretical base with which to explore the lived experiences of unaccompanied minors. Such an approach disempowers those who act to challenge the forces of exclusion that stem from the immigration system. It also attributes a unity to the immigration system that is misleading; the structure that is the immigration system is peopled with contradictions and tensions even if it is discursively produced as a cohesive entity. To adequately conceive of human agency, to understand the everyday lived experiences of unaccompanied minors and to account for social phenomena at a micro level, requires a theoretical base capable of greater fluidity, flexibility and intricacy than functionalist thought permits.

The literature reviewed so far has emphasised the significance of understanding children as social agents who are active in their own lives and those of others around them. The developmental model of childhood fails to do this. Whilst Giddens' (1976, 1979, 1984) theory of structuration reconciles this binary to demonstrate how agency and structure feed into one another cyclically, understanding the nature of agency, its incompleteness and unevenness requires further probing (Oswell, 2012). Whilst the third research question will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter, it is important to note here that this study is concerned with agency and experience in a relational capacity; that is, the policy and practice of relevant front-line service providers forms a necessary part of the context in which unaccompanied minors are located and the relationships in which they are embedded.

SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the literature from a range of disciplines relating to unaccompanied minors, childhood and agency in order to build a conceptual framework from which one can understand the agency of young men in practices of integration. Firstly, in exploring the relationship between structure and agency in sociology, I outlined Durkheim's (2013a) theory of structure as ‘social facts’ forming a 'compelling and coercive power' on the individual in

society (p.52). This functionalist thought understands society as a system of complex and interdependent parts and is developed further in the work of Parsons (1937, 1951). Stressing the shared values and norms in society, Parsons (ibid) conceived of structure as a social system directing individuals' social behaviour.

Attempts to reconcile the dualism between structure and agency in social theory include Giddens' (1976, 1979, 2013) structuration theory. Here, structure and agency feed into one another cyclically in a relationship of duality (Giddens, 1979). For Giddens (ibid.), structure is both the medium and outcome of social activity; individuals have capacity for the reflexive monitoring of their own behaviour and that of others and thus are able to respond with some flexibility with the resources available to them. This entails the possibility of social production in addition to social reproduction, meaning individuals are not solely constrained by structures but can use them creatively to make a difference in their lives (ibid).

Part 2 of this chapter reviewed the literature more closely related to childhood and agency. It commenced with an outline of the developmental model of childhood, which located children on a natural, pre-discursive biologically-driven path towards adult completion (Boyden, 1997). The sociology of childhood borrowed from this model in its concept of socialisation. In both these approaches, childhood was understood from the vantage point of adulthood and ascribed characteristics of passivity, dependency and irrationality to children (ibid.). The implications of these models are examined with reference to the phenomenon of age assessment and the asylum system more generally. Part 2 then explored some of the criticisms of the developmental model of childhood and outlined the new paradigm of childhood studies, which articulated the recognition of children as agentive and the contextual nature of childhood (James and Prout, 1990).

Part 3 was concerned with the challenge posed by Oswell (2012), to 'provide an analytics which is able to explain agency in the context of contingent empirical realities' (p.50). This drew on empirical research with children in the majority world, with attention to shifting gradations of agency, normative assumptions and the relationship of agency to vulnerability. Finally, I draw on the concept of relational agency in terms of assemblages and multiple becomings (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Lee, 2001; Oswell, 2012). I concluded that the concept of assemblage is particularly useful in exploring the agency of unaccompanied minors in that it allows us to move away from the unified social agent and to understand agency in terms of relations and contexts.

CHAPTER 3: APPROACHING INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

Concerns for social cohesion and greater integration on the part of some migrant and ethnic minority groups have featured regularly in UK policy and political discourse for several years (Kalra and Kapoor, 2009; Cantle, 2012; Ratcliffe, 2012; Heath and Demireva, 2014). The increase in numbers of refugees settling in Europe has renewed attention to the concept of integration and the appropriate state and societal responses to facilitate its success (Bakker et al., 2016). Yet the concept of integration is difficult to define (Council of Europe, 1997; Castles et al., 2001; Ager and Strang, 2008). Robinson (1998) refers to integration as a '…chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most' (p.118). This chapter draws on existing literature that engages with the concept of integration in order to build a conceptual framework for exploring unaccompanied minors' experiences of integration. Part 1 explores the concept of integration in relation to national cohesion. This includes multiculturalism and assimilationism as two frameworks of integration that have been highly influential over the last seventy years. Part 2 moves to literature concerned specifically with the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. In doing so the focus shifts from the 'top-down' performative concepts of Part 1 as I pay attention to the micro- and meso- levels of integration practices and outcomes. I invoke here the concept of social capital, which features prominently in relevant models of integration (e.g. Ager and Strang, 2004) and evaluate the utility of social capital as a tool for understanding experiences of integration from the point of view of the young men concerned.

Part 3 builds on this with attention to the specificities of the space of childhood in which unaccompanied minors are situated and considers a psycho-social approach to resettlement for unaccompanied minors.

MODELS OF (NATIONAL) COHESION

> *People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture ... and, you know, the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in.*
>
> (Margaret Thatcher quoted in Goodfellow, 2019, p.87)

The quotation above is indicative of the most significant underlying belief underpinning much discourse around the concept of integration: that there exists a stable, bounded culture of 'Britishness' and that the introduction of something 'other', something external to this is inherently problematic. Without appropriate management of the stranger in the midst there is the very real risk that 'people are going to react' and disorder will ensue. Joppke (2011) states:

> *Today, the concept of integration takes for granted that domestic integration exists, but that it is put to the test from the outside, by the arrival of newcomers.* (p.158)

The concept of integration itself refers rather broadly to some form of cohesion within a given society (Favell, 2014b). A society which is integrated is one:

> *imagined as a complex, 'organic' bounded whole, made up of differentiated parts, but held together by shared abstract values and dominant mainstream norms of behaviour*.
>
> (Favell, 2014b, Chapter 4, Section 1, Para.2).

Integration and assimilation, Favell (ibid.) writes, are sociological concepts rooted in Durkheimian functionalism. They are 'performative concepts' (ibid, loc.1708) 'pointing towards the unifying cohesion' necessary for any society to function effectively (ibid, loc.1708). Durkheim himself argued that social cohesion is formed through the production of a collective consciousness (Durkheim, 2013a). Members of a particular society, he argued (ibid.), produce norms, beliefs and values through the actions, which then in turn form a coercive force upon individuals. This forms the moral, cohesive basis of society (ibid.). It follows logically, from this premise, that the introduction of individuals who are not seen to subscribe to the same collective consciousness is inherently problematic. Consequently, the concepts of integration and assimilation were employed in public policy debates in response to the perceived 'challenges' of immigration and diversity within apparently unified societies. Integration, Favell (2001) states, is a tool specifically of liberal democracies to maintain a 'societal glue' particularly in regard to approaches towards ethnic minorities (Favell, 2001). Below, I expand further upon the concept of assimilation, which, in a Western European context[6], prescribes a particular means by which new arrivals to a country become part of the new society through the gradual abandonment of cultural and religious differences, and the remoulding with a unified, national culture.

[6] The term 'assimilationism' has developed distinctively in the USA and Western Europe. See Favell (2014a)

Assimilationism

Proponents of assimilationism view integration as a process by which new arrivals to a country become part of the new society through 'progressive cultural and structural adaptation' on the part of the migrant (Faist et al., 2013, p.89). Whilst initially newcomers may face psychological difficulties following their arrival, over time they become accustomed to new people, behaviours and situations and thus eventually assimilate. Faist *et al.* (ibid.) write;

> *In a stylized version of assimilation, progressive cultural and structural adaptation is portrayed as an almost inevitable process that takes several generations, with eventual assimilation its final outcome. In the course of that process migrants would leave their old roots behind. The second generation in particular is expected to have few ties to the former homes of their immigrant parents* (Faist et al., 2013, p.88-89)

Integration through assimilation is, therefore, very much 'one-way' and places the responsibility of adaptation firmly on the shoulders of the migrant and his/her descendants. There is a dominant culture to which new migrants, over the generations, should conform; the previous culture of the migrant should be abandoned in the name of conformity (ibid.). Much like the quotation from Djavadi (2018) below, a process of 'disintegration' must precede integration.

> *Because to really integrate into a culture, I can tell you that you have to disintegrate first, at least partially, from your own. You have to separate, detach, disassociate. No one who demands that immigrants make 'an effort at integration' would dare look them in the face and ask them to start making the necessary 'effort at disintegration.' They're asking people to stand atop the mountain without climbing up it first.*
>
> (Djavadi, 2018, loc. 1391)

The French model is a prominent illustration of assimilationism, which relied upon the concept of 'The Republic' as all encompassing (Brubaker, 2003). This was manifested in terms of 'separation between public and private realms… and between the state and the church' (Bertossi, 2011, p.1562). According to Brubaker, whilst, in the second half of the twentieth century, France adopted a '*droit à la différence'* – a right to difference- it was interpreted, particularly by the political right wing as '*Mais oui, bien sûr, chez vous'* (Brubaker, 2003, p.44-45). That is, a manifested 'difference' from the prescribed 'Frenchman' was to be tolerated solely in the private realm. Within the public sphere, the citizens of France are expected, for example, to refrain from dressing in a manner that reveals cultural or religious difference to a constructed neutral norm. This was demonstrated publicly in the summer of 2016 when French Muslim women were banned from wearing the *burkini* on beaches in and around Nice (Berg and Lundahl, 2016).

The bans on the wearing of the *burkini* were framed in terms of a 'colour blind egalitarianism' (Almeida, 2018, p.30). It is important to note, however, that the same concern over public presentation of religiosity was not directed, for example, at wearers of the crucifix or kippot (ibid.) Almeida (ibid.) describes this episode as concealing an exclusionary logic to the concept of French *laïcité* arguing that 'the burkini bans were not about defining the beach as a space of religious neutrality', (ibid., p.30). One article written by a priest in the *Catholic Herald* at the time addressed the apparent distinction between the *burkini* and nuns' habits, stating: 'The burkini, unlike nuns' habits, is a challenge to the French way of life' (Lucie-Smith, 2016). In reality, assimilationism in this context is more complex than an egalitarian commitment to the secular in public. The call to religious neutrality was not, it seemed, a requirement for all displays of religiosity and signalled instead a codification of legitimate belonging, one that was, unlike Islam, conducive to a perception of national cohesion.

Multiculturalism

Favell (2001) compares the assimilationist tradition in France with that of the multiculturalist agenda in the UK. He illuminates these differences in understandings of integration with reference to the second half of the twentieth century (Favell, 2001). Whereas France adopted a universalist idea of transforming immigrants so they can be absorbed into an unchanging French society, the UK articulated a discourse of multiculturalism and race relations, which sought to mediate relations between majority and minority populations as a management of public order (Favell, 2001).

Instead of the French tradition of alleged neutrality in the public sphere, the British tradition of multiculturalism spoke of:

> *the recognition of group difference within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of a shared citizenship and national identity.*
>
> (Modood, 2013, p.2).

There are important distinctions to be made between the uses of term 'multicultural': Britain as a multicultural society, for instance, may refer to ethnic or cultural diversity; Modood (2013) speaks of the movement of peoples forming a multicultural society, specifically the immigration of non-white peoples into countries that were predominantly white. In addition to this, multiculturalism is a set of policies and laws, a means of 'including into a reformed national citizenship those who were marked by difference (racial, ethnic, cultural, etc.)' (ibid., p.183). Heath and Demireva (2014, p.161), describe multiculturalism as 'a programme for giving recognition to ethno-religious groups and their cultures'. This might be manifested, for example,

in terms of the provision of *halal* meat in hospitals and schools (Favell, 2014b). Finally, multiculturalism can refer to a political idea and movement:

> *Grounded in the concept of national citizenship and therefore a concept of equality, multiculturalism extends this concept of equal citizenship from uniformity of rights to recognition of difference; from anti-discrimination, challenging stereotypes to turning the negative into a positive identity rather than into an undifferentiated citizenship.*
>
> (Modood, 2017, p.184)

Though built on a foundation of individual rights, multiculturalism involved group rights with the state providing 'political and institutional accommodation to marginalised groups' at a national and local level (ibid., p.184). Modood (ibid.) adds:

> *Multiculturalism is a critique of assimilative nationalism or nation-building/maintenance in favour of the expanding and remaking of the national identity, remaking the 'We' in an inclusive way…* (p..184-5).

Based on these conceptualisations of multiculturalism, (as a set of policies, as a political movement and as a descriptor of demographic diversity), Modood (ibid.), outlines a series of points, summarised below, which further inform our understanding of the realities of multicultural relations in the UK context. Firstly, whilst, during post-war migration, 'subjects of the Crown' attained equality with native residents in terms of legal status, a climate of racism towards "non-whites" eroded such positions of equality in practice. Secondly, a climate of racism against non-whites led to calls to limit further immigration whilst at the same time laws were created to resist racial discrimination for those who had already arrived from former colonies; the two responses, controlling further immigration whilst seeking social equality, were summarised in the 1960s by Labour politician Roy Hattersley:

> *Without integration, limitation is inexcusable; without limitation, integration is impossible*. (quoted in ibid., p.187)

Thirdly, recognition of the distinctiveness of minority groups based on 'race[7]' preceded calls for the same recognition for ethnicity and religion, prompting the acknowledgement of forms of racism such as anti-Muslim racism. According to Modood (ibid.), from the Rushdie Affair[8] in

[7] Modood refers to 'race' here in inverted commas: 'Beyond legal status and rights, the most salient feature of the immigrants from the point of view of British society was their 'race', the fact that they were 'coloured' or not white.' (Modood, 2017, p.186)

[8] The Rushdie Affair refers to the death sentence pronounced upon the author Salman Rushdie by the religious leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini following the publication of Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses.* Rushdie was forced into hiding. Several protests, organised by Islamist groups, took place in the UK and abroad. (Andrew, 2009)

1989 onwards, followed by 9/11 and the July 7th bombings in 2005, anti-Muslim activism became central to a, 'multiculturalism that was being overwhelmed by security concerns…' (ibid., p.188). Finally, from the 1990s onwards, the UK witnessed changes in the countries of origin of migration flows. Previously, migrants to the UK had primarily been from former colonies. The 1990s saw the arrival of people escaping countries of war and violence (e.g. Afghanistan, Somalia, Kurdistan) as well as new arrivals from the Middle East and Africa looking for employment and better life opportunities.

The history of multiculturalism in the UK, albeit complex and shifting over the decades, is an important facet of the context in which this thesis is situated. On one hand, unaccompanied minors arriving in the UK are encountering a society within which anti-discrimination legislation is embedded. There is a history, within the UK, of anti-racist activism (see e.g. Andrews, 2013; Andrews, 2019) and a long-standing project of national re-imagining capable of encompassing difference without, theoretically, demanding assimilation. On the other hand, the realities of equal citizenship and social equality were, and continue to be, eroded in practice; in the UK, there is a context of rising Islamophobia as well as practices of securitisation that are targeted at Muslim minorities (see e.g. Massoumi et al., 2017). The multicultural heritage of the UK, therefore, forms a complex context for young men seeking asylum, particularly those from Muslim-majority countries.

This context, however, is complicated further still by political events and policy shifts in the UK and beyond that have targeted discourses of multiculturalism and argued for new paradigms with which to conceive the integration of ethnic minorities into the host society. It is to these new narratives, claiming the 'death of multiculturalism' (Kundnani, 2002), that I now turn.

Community Cohesion and the Demise of Multiculturalism?

During the summer of 2001 in Bradford, in the north of England, the Anti-Nazi League organised a meeting in the city's Centenary Square (Harris, 2001). Around 500 people, mostly Asian men attended. In a nearby pub, the National Front (NF) were meeting. Members of the National Front began shouting racist abuse (ibid.). Later it emerged that a large number of people had travelled from across Britain to Bradford to join the NF meeting (ibid.) The events in Bradford followed similar events in Oldham earlier in the summer.

These disturbances provoked a national debate surrounding the relationship between minority (mainly Muslim) ethnic groups and majority white British neighbourhoods (Ratcliffe, 2012). In response to the outbreaks, the government commissioned two reports into community cohesion (Home Office, 2001). Both reports focussed on the spatial separation between white populations and South Asian (principally Muslim) populations in the cities (Ratcliffe, 2012). The

Cantle report (Home Office, 2001) in particular centred on the experiences of 'parallel lives' between the communities, with Muslim populations viewed as guilty of 'self-segregation' (Phillips et al., 2008; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Ratcliffe, 2012). The Denham report (Home Office, 2001) followed a similar vein stating:

> *We recognise that in many areas affected by disorder or community tensions, there is little interchange between members of different racial, cultural and religious communities and that proactive measures will have to be taken to promote dialogue and understanding.* (p.3)

Following the Cantle report (2001) in particular, a series of government narratives and programmes of integration emerged in the first decade of the 21st century (McGhee, 2008). Pivotal to this programme was the notion of citizenship; the need to establish a 'greater sense of citizenship, based on (a few) common principles which are shared and observed by all sections of the community' was the pivotal recommendation in order to avoid further violent clashes (Home Office, 2001, p.10). This concept of citizenship was not understood as antithetical to difference but was rather about building and locating a realm of commonality. It was argued that too great a focus on difference, endemic in multicultural policies, had contributed to the creation of 'parallel lives' (2001): a situation which was antithetical to social cohesion (Ratcliffe, 2012).

The narrative of division, facilitated through multicultural policies, was echoed by Trevor Phillips, who was then the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality. Phillips felt that the focus for some years on difference between groups had fostered division and created isolation of certain communities:

> *In recent years we've focused far too much on the 'multi' and not enough on common culture. We've emphasised what divides us over what unites us. We have allowed tolerance of diversity to harden into the effective isolation of communities, in which some people think special separate values ought to apply* (Phillips, 2005, p.8).

The 'community cohesion' agenda offered little reflection on material inequalities and economic decline that formed the backdrop to the 2001 disturbances (Ratcliffe, 2012). The assumption of self-segregation of Muslim populations is especially problematic; the focus on 'choice' un-mediated by 'disparities in income, wealth, housing options, fear of crime and racist violence', offers a partial and unbalanced understanding of dynamics of integration and separation (Webster, 2003, p.114). Such an approach does little to encourage policy and action that tackle material inequalities and discourses of fear that provoke violence and distrust between communities. Instead, the discourse of 'community cohesion' gave explanatory power to the

support for ‘British values’, which served to further individualize responsibility for social cohesion (Romain and Vincent, 2016).

In government and voluntary sector publications, a range of practices were instigated that aimed to instil a common sense of ‘British values’, such as respect for the law, that would provide the cohesive glue for societies (Ratcliffe, 2012). The bombings in London of July 2005[9] raised further concerns about lack of cohesion and a fear of radicalization (Ratcliffe, 2012). The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC) was established in the wake of the bombings, which went on to propose key principles ‘underpin(ning) a new understanding of integration and cohesion’ comprising ‘shared futures’, ‘a new model of rights and responsibilities’, ‘a new emphasis on mutual respect and civility’ and ‘visible social justice’ (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007, p.7). The response of the government to the CIC's report included a commitment to the dissemination of a common ground of understanding: so-called British values (DCLG, 2008; Ratcliffe, 2012).

In some arguments emanating from the political establishment and media, British multiculturalism was now obsolete (Cremin and Warwick, 2008). Gordon Brown, Prime Minister from 2007 to 2010, argued in *The Telegraph* newspaper that the:

> … *once fashionable view of multiculturalism, which, by emphasising the separate and the exclusive, simply pushed communities apart.*
>
> (Brown, 2007 quoted in Cremin and Warwick, 2008, p. 40)

Brown (ibid.) argued that the focus on celebration and toleration of difference had failed to address ‘underlying attitudes and values’ (Cremin and Warwick, 2008, p.40). The segregation of communities, particularly along ethnic lines, had resulted in a climate of mutual distrust, with violent consequences during times of tension (Cantle, 2005; Cremin and Warwick, 2008).

Alongside movement away from the accommodation of diversity came statements and discourses that expressed animosity towards certain manifestations of difference. One prominent example came from the former foreign and home secretary, Jack Straw, who wrote in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* that the veil worn by some Muslim women was a ‘visible statement of separation and of difference’ adding that he asked those wearing the full veil to remove it when attending his constituency surgeries[10] (Bartlett, 2006). He continued, adding that he was concerned that ‘wearing the veil was bound to make better, positive relations

[9] In July 2005, a series of bombs exploded in London; the perpetrators were born and/or raised in Britain and were Islamic extremists, prompting, as Ratcliffe (2012) states, ‘considerable soul-searching in government circles about how such ‘extremism’ could be incubated amongst second generation migrants’ (p.269).

[10] Members of Parliament regularly hold one-to-one meetings with their constituents.

between the two communities more difficult' and that he was worried 'about the wider implications for community relations of what is an increasing trend (of women wearing the veil)' (ibid., no page). In this example, the visible manifestation of difference (the veil) is seen as incompatible with inter-communal relations.

Interculturalism

The focus on community cohesion and the apparent demise of multiculturalism featured in an emerging discourse of interculturalism, which, in the UK, was advanced by Ted Cantle (2005, 2012, 2013, 2016; 2018) author of the Cantle Report (Home Office, 2001). Cantle argued that multicultural policies such as those enacted by UK and most European governments had become increasingly exposed as inadequate, most notably following the disturbances in some northern cities and towns in England discussed above, and as an emerging perception of extremism within Muslim communities following 9/11 and the July 7th bombings in London. Cantle states that '…multicultural policies, in Europe at least, are not fit for purpose and have slowed, if not inhibited, both integration and acceptance of difference' (Cantle, 2018, p.133). Given that multiculturalism was preoccupied with divisions of 'race' and the accompanying socio-economic analysis, Cantle argues (2018) that 'communities were encouraged to view their identities as special and fixed' (p.136). An increasingly interdependent, interconnected and globalised modern world gives rise to conditions of 'super' or 'hyper' diversity where people 'are themselves increasingly crossing borders, intermarrying, building new virtual networks and creating real and tangible personal relationships at all levels' (Cantle, 2018, p.137). As a conceptual framework, Cantle argues, the focus of multiculturalism on majority/minority distinctions within a national framework is insufficient. Instead, interculturalism is premised upon the notion of plural and fluid identities. Figure 8 below, taken from Cantle (2018), is a summary of the main features of interculturalism as a conceptual and policy framework, juxtaposed with that of multiculturalism:

Multiculturalism	Interculturalism
Identity groups to be protected. Differences are static and groups are homogeneous.	The concept of difference is dynamic and evolving. Group identity is heterogeneous.
Minority differences to be defended in the face of assimilationist tendencies.	Identities, both majority and minority, are constantly being remade through their interrelation and through external and global influences.
Personal identity is self-defined and reinforced with people from the same background and heritage.	Personal identity can only be understood in relation to others, through a process of openness and exploration.
Difference is in homogeneous 'groupist' terms	Identities are plural, with increasing intermarriage and hybrid identities.
Difference is situated along majority/minority lines within the nation.	National references of difference are disrupted by international exchanges, e.g. diaspora and transnational social media communications.
Difference is binary in relation to 'race' and ethnicity (faith as an ethnic group).	Difference is multifaceted including gender, disability and sexual orientation.
Difference, reflective of historical exploitation, determined by socio-economic factors to be addressed through equality programmes.	Socio-economic factors are important but not the sole determinants of prejudices. Education programmes can challenge such preconceptions.
Fear that promotion of commonality would tend towards assimilation.	Common values and belonging are developed at a societal level through a multifaceted collective identity.
Has restricted debate about diversity denying the 'oxygen of publicity' to extremists.	Encourages open debate with looser legal framework in terms of 'dangerous conversations'

Figure 8 Multiculturalism vs. Interculturalism taken from (Cantle, 2018, p.144)

Interculturalism has become established as a new approach to managing diversity in liberal-democratic societies (Joppke, 2018). Joppke (ibid.) argues:

> *While its near-namesake 'multiculturalism' is heavily contested or even discarded in more and more places, especially in Europe, interculturalism enjoys unbridled support, particularly among policy elites, and it has been firmly institutionalized, for instance, in pedagogy or social work, whose curricula now include required courses in 'intercultural competence'.* (p.1)

It is not, however, without its critics (e.g. Meer and Modood, 2012; Antonsich, 2016; Modood, 2016). Joppke (2018, p.1) accused interculturalists of using 'highly distorted visions of it (multiculturalism)' and notes that the 'intercultural alternative rests on a polemical view of

multiculturalism that few of its advocates would endorse; (Joppke, 2017, p.37). Zapata-Barrero (2017) suggests interculturalism is complementary to multiculturalism, rather than an alternative. Interculturalism, he argues, serves as a mediator between multiculturalism and civic integration policies, 'whose impulse of limits to tolerance and of finding a common ground is taken on board by… interculturalism' (Joppke, 2018, p.3). Here there is agreement on the need for a conceptual space for common values amidst multiple identities.

As outlined above, proponents of interculturalism have criticised multiculturalism for a disproportionate emphasis on 'race' as a marker of difference (Joppke, 2018). Cantle alludes to the growing recognition of multiple, hybrid forms of identity including, for example, those related to sexual orientation, or those stemming from mixed heritage (ibid.). He cites the example of a 'Glaswegian, Pakistani teenager of Muslim descent who supports Glasgow Rangers in a Catholic school' suggesting that she may 'hold a different identity at home compared to that at school' and that 'she might have a different identity next week' (Cantle, 2016, p.476-477). This particular conception of multiple identities is however, problematic, as Modood (2016) responds:

> *… the recognition of multiple identities is one that multiculturalists have long recognised but have had to balance against the fact that for some people certain identities are paramount, they are absolutely central… for some minorities, especially those who are being harassed all the time, having fingers pointed at them for being backward, alien, for not fitting in, for being terrorist and so on, their minority identities stick to them… Hence, we cannot ask all minorities to wear their identities lightly, flexibly and contextually – to do so becomes a kind of postmodern assimilationism.* (p.15)

For unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK, there are similarly certain identities that 'stick', that may lead to their discrimination, or that are 'paramount' for other reasons; an Eritrean asylum-seeker who supports Chelsea FC will, for instance, find his future in the UK dependent more upon his country of origin than his interest in football. In addition to this, whilst proponents of interculturalism may position multiple, shifting identities as of equal standing in terms of societal cohesion and a common core, the language and implementation of common values, of British values in this context, is very clear regarding which identities are incompatible with cohesion (Kundnani, 2007). The common denominator between Jack Straw's comments on the *burqa* and on the 'parallel lives' narrative following the riots in northern England in 2001 is not accidental. This is particularly relevant for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, many of whom come from Muslim-majority countries.

From the outline of models of national cohesion above, I argue that unaccompanied minors will encounter, upon their arrival in the UK, a top-down narrative that, whilst claiming to reject assimilationism, rejects the group solidarity of salient identities that formed the basis of multiculturalism as a political project. In its stead, the doctrine of interculturalism prescribes shifting, fluctuating multiple identities resulting in a rather atomised and alienating effect on the individual. At the same time, Islamophobic and racist cultures institutionalised in UK society exert a coercive force as young people negotiate their new lives in the UK.

Superdiversity

The concept of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) is useful in disrupting traditional notions of minority conformity that continue to inform dominant policy and discourse in the UK (see, e.g. Casey, 2016). Vertovec (2007) argues that the nature and scale of immigration into the UK since the 1990s requires a re-evaluation in policy and in social scientific study in order to account for 'new, smaller, less-organized, legally differentiated and non-citizen immigrant groups' (ibid., p.1027). Rather than collectivized identities along majority/minority lines, the concept of superdiversity pertains to shifts in patterns of migration along the lines of:

> *…differential legal statuses and their concomitant conditions, divergent labour market experiences, discrete configurations of gender and age, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents. The dynamic interaction of these variables is what is meant by 'super-diversity'* (ibid., p.1025)

Whilst the term superdiversity was first exemplified with reference to London (Vertovec, 2007), it has increasingly come to apply to other cities and towns in the UK, such as Birmingham, Leicester, Luton and Slough (Grzymala-Kazolwski and Phillimore, 2018). It is also increasingly a global phenomenon, exemplified with analysis pertaining to Belgium and the Netherlands (Geldof, 2016), Turkey (Biehl, 2015), Italy (Boccagni, 2015), the US (Wiley, 2014), China (Varis and Xuan, 2011), Melbourne (Davern et al., 2015), New York, Singapore and Johannesburg (Vertovec, 2015) and New Zealand (Spoonley and Butcher, 2009). Thus, super-diversity is increasingly emerging as a descriptive concept intended to capture demographic realities in an increasing number of populations.

With its focus on multiple identities and fluidity between these identities, super-diversity as a descriptor may offer some parallels with the concept of interculturalism outlined above. Abdou and Geddes (2017) suggest:

> *Interculturalism is predicated on the idea that differences are dynamic and fluid and highlights differences within groups, which is actually very much reflective of the reality of superdiversity* (p.495)

Critics have suggested that superdiversity as a concept risks a romanticisation of difference (Ramadan, 2011) or that it downplays structures and practices that underpin inequality (Vickers et al., 2013): accusations that could equally be levelled at interculturalism. Gryzmala-Kazlowska and Phillimore (2018), however, suggest that superdiversity can serve as a conceptual tool with which 'to capture multi-dimensionality and complexity of the contemporary world' (p.186). They suggest:

> *A strong version of super-diversity proposes an alternative social paradigm of extended complexity and mobility to the more limited and static paradigm which prevails, allowing for thinking about society to move beyond traditional fixed groups and categories* (p.186).

In order to develop this alternative social paradigm, I turn first to the concept of capital, which features in much literature concerned with integration, particularly the integration of refugees (Home Office, 2004; Beirens et al., 2007; Ager and Strang, 2008). This literature tends to focus on migrants' progressive acquisition of (social) capital, with integration conceptualised as both a process and an end-state. I return to the concept of superdiversity and its concern with multidimensionality following an outline of the key literature in regards to refugee integration.

Integration in Relation to Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

In this section, I outline conceptual explorations of social capital, drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1986, 1989, 1992) and Putnam (1995). I then apply this conceptual outline to the domain of refugee integration, exploring the conceptual framework of Ager and Strang (Home Office, 2004; Ager and Strang, 2008) and consider how the concept of social capital can inform understandings of refugee integration.

Capital in all its forms

The term 'capital' is usually associated with the economic sphere and monetary exchange (Moore, 2012). Bourdieu, however, advocates for a wider use of the term, arguing:

> *It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory.* (Bourdieu, 2006, p.105)

The term capital should thus be extended to apply to a:

> *wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks of circuits within and across different fields.*
>
> (Moore, 2012, p.99)

Bourdieu identifies three forms of capital: first, that of economic capital, which is 'immediately and directly convertible into money' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243); this includes wealth, but also other economic possessions that 'increase an actor's capacities in society' (Sisiäinen, 2000, p.11). A second form of capital is that of cultural capital, which has three forms: in its embodied form, such as manners of speaking or self-presentation, in its objectified form such as books or works of art and, in an institutionalized form, such as educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). A third form of capital, which is the focus herein, is that of social capital. Bourdieu describes social capital as:

> *…the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition*.
>
> (Bourdieu, 1986, p.21)

There are two components to social capital. The first, is as a resource connected with group membership and social networks (Sisiäinen, 2000). Thus:

> *The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent… depends on the size of the network or connections that he can effectively mobilize.* (Bourdieu, 1986, p.249)

Groups such as voluntary associations, trade unions, and secret societies such as the freemasons are examples of this (Sisiäinen, 2000). Social capital is inseparable from other forms of capital and there is a certain degree of fungibility, whereby one form of capital can be converted into another. For example, the social capital of contacts through the golf club can be converted into economic capital with the establishment of business deals (Rogers, 2014).

The second component of social capital concerns its symbolic character and is based on 'mutual cognition and recognition' (Sisiäinen, 2000, p.12):

> *In order to become effective, social capital, 'objective' differences between groups or classes have to be transformed into symbolic differences and classifications that make possible symbolic recognition and distinction.* (ibid., p.12)

Social capital is thus mediated symbolically, defining 'what forms and uses of capital are recognized as legitimate bases of social positions in a given society' (ibid., p.12). There is a strong ideological component to Bourdieu's conception of capital in all its forms, to do with the 'arbitrary way in which the forms of capital are distributed among individuals in society' (Sisiäinen, 2000, p.13). Contrastingly, the concept of social capital is employed by Putnam (1995), as outlined below, in a more functionalist tradition, concerned with the formation and maintenance of a well-functioning economy and high levels of political integration (Sisiäinen, 2000).

Social Connections, Civic Engagement and the Erosion of Social Capital

In this section, I turn to a particular formulation of the concept of social capital advanced by Putnam (1995; 2001). Putnam was concerned with the relationship between civic engagement and the consolidation of democracy in the US, yet his work is relevant to this thesis due to its influence across the social sciences (Andriani and Christoforou, 2016), across the public sphere (Ferragina and Arrigoni, 2017), and across public policy (Cheong et al., 2007). In particular, the concept of social capital, stemming from Putnam's (1995; 2001) formulation, features prominently in the literature related to refugee integration (e.g. Lamba and Krahn, 2003; Smyth et al., 2010; Elliott and Yusuf, 2014). Consequently, I provide an outline of Putnam's (1995; 2001) theory in order to understand its application to the phenomenon of integration specific to unaccompanied minors.

High levels of civic engagement and social connectedness result, Putnam (1995, p.65) argued, in 'better schools, faster economic development, lower crime, and more effective government'. Whilst the relationship between such variables is complex, the common framework employed to understand these phenomena is that of social capital, understood as 'features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (ibid., p.66).

With this in mind, Putnam (ibid.) charts a decline in levels of civic engagement across the US, but with applicability to other contemporary societies. This decline is evidenced in terms of political participation, with lower levels of voter turnout and higher level of distrust in government, in trade union membership, in participation in parent-teacher associations (PTA) and in civic and fraternal organisations like the boy scouts. In less formal contexts, Putnam also

refers to the loosening of bonds within the family, fewer instances of neighbourliness, and a decline in levels of trust across society (ibid.).

There are several factors offered as explanations for this decline in civic engagement (ibid.). They include the movement of women into the labour force, which has reduced the time and energy available for the building of social capital (ibid.). Other demographic changes, such as higher divorce rates and lower real wages may play a contributory factor, as married, middle-class parents tend to higher levels of social involvement than others.

In later work, Putnam (2001) distinguishes between different forms of social capital: social bridging and social bonding. Those forms of capital that are 'inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups' are forms of bonding (ibid., p.22). Forms of bridging capital, on the other hand, are 'outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages' (Putnam, 1995, p.22). Bonding capital is often found within ethnic enclave communities providing social and psychological support in addition to employment and labour. Bridging, on the other hand, is about the formation of wider connections, and the possibilities for new networks. Later, I make use of the distinctions in social capital advanced in Putnam's (ibid.) work, in terms of bonds, bridges and links, as an organisational tool with which to present and explore findings from fieldwork, and also to offer a critique of the limitations of Putnam's conceptualisation. Bourdieu's use of the term social capital is rooted in an understanding of class, social position and power. In Putnam (1995; 2001), however, social capital appears to be divorced from such complexities. Instead, in Putnam's work (ibid.), social capital is equated with the inevitability of economic growth and prosperity through civic engagement and voluntary associations (DeFilippis, 2001).

Social Capital and Refugee Integration

The notion of social capital has been widely adopted in much of the literature concerning refugee integration as a means of framing aspects of social connection (Strang and Ager, 2010). In both policy and academic literature, social connections have become central to understanding refugee integration (Beirens et al., 2007; Korac, 2009). Experiences of refugees demonstrate the importance, of establishing 'bonding' relationships (Strang and Ager, 2010). There is evidence, for example, of refugees in Europe moving from better-quality accommodation in order to be with family members (Losi and Strang, 2008). Research in Malta also reported high levels of distress from refugees who did not know what had happened to family members, and who 'made it clear that they could not begin to think about integration until they knew that their families were safe' (Strang and Ager, 2010, p.596). The specific contribution made by bonding capital to the process of integration is documented in the work

of Atfield et al., (2007). They suggest that bonding capital provides resources in three main areas; these are information and material resources, emotional resources, and capacity-building resources (ibid.). Over time, they argue, the value attached to the network changes as the emphasis moves from the material to the emotional (ibid.). Much local service provision for refugees is focused on building social bonding connections, recognising the role of co-ethnic communities in facilitating access to information and resources (Griffiths et al., 2005; Spicer, 2008). Similarly, the emotional support provided through bonding relationships is also acknowledged as facilitating refugee integration (Losi and Strang, 2008).

Alongside this, however, there is also some evidence tempering the value of social bonds. For example, Newbold and McKeary's work (2010) found that the reliance on family members as interpreters can prove problematic for issues of confidentiality when accessing health services. There are also instances of refugees not wishing to associate with co-nationals, for reasons of political division, for example (Ager and Strang, 2008). Whilst familial and co-ethnic ties account for the majority of social bonds in the literature, this is not always necessarily the case (Strang and Ager, 2010). In the UK, the introduction of the dispersal policy in 1999 meant that in some cases asylum-seekers were accommodated in areas of the country where there was not a pre-existing co-ethnic community with whom to integrate (ibid.). Additionally, Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) have been acknowledged as playing an important role in the facilitation of bonding capital (Griffiths et al., 2005).

In addition to social bonds, there are arguments that complementary social bridges should also be developed 'in order to avoid the emergence of separate, very bonded but disconnected communities' (Strang and Ager, 2010, p.598). Ager and Strang (ibid.) advocate a balance between bonding and bridging, emphasising that relationships with host communities need not necessarily be at the expense of bonding relationships. There is evidence, moreover, that strong bonding capital, providing emotional support and confidence, is an important pre-condition for bridging capital (e.g. Spicer, 2008). Research has shown that asylum-seekers accommodated in areas with existing migrant communities and established ethnic minorities tended to experience such places as safer and more inclusive than those accommodated in areas with low levels of immigration or diversity (ibid.). Children of asylum-seekers, for instance, reported the importance of being able to make friends with other children from similar backgrounds to their own. However, having established such bonds, children were more likely to go outside the home and escape their parents' surveillance, as they felt safe outside the home. Friendly neighbourhoods, for children, were characterised by one's ability to develop social networks with other children and, whilst social bonds tended to be stronger than bridges, there were instances of social bridges across groups, (Spicer, 2008). Children reported that

social bonds and peer group solidarity enabled them to step outside the home more and to feel safer in public spaces, thus achieving greater independence (Spicer, 2008). However, there is also research which problematizes the emphasis on bridges as somehow a 'higher' form and/or means of integration than bonding relationships (McPherson, 2010).

The term 'social links' refers to 'connections between individuals and structures of the state, such as government services' (Ager and Strang, 2008, p.181). The widening of networks, through the addition of social bridges upon a foundation of social bonds, can promote the development of trust in and relationships with institutions (Hynes, 2009). Integration programmes that targeted refugee and asylum-seeker-specific links with state services also provided opportunities for service users to meet with one another, share food and drink and to both give and receive support (Beirens et al., 2007). Thus, the development of social bonds, bridges and links reinforced one another, facilitating refugee and asylum-seeker integration.

Indicators of Integration: A Conceptual Framework

In 2002, the Home Office commissioned a study aimed at encouraging a 'coherent understanding and approach to refugee integration work across the UK' (Home Office, 2004, p.1). The work was undertaken by Ager and Strang at Queen Margaret University (ibid.), for whom the *Indicators of Integration* addressed three broad aims:

1. To explore different understandings of the concept of integration
2. To construct a framework, based on a sufficiently common understanding of integration, which can be of use to those working in the field of refugee integration
3. To assist in the planning and evaluation of services in order to facilitate refugee integration (ibid., p.1)

A summary of this framework appears below in Figure 9:

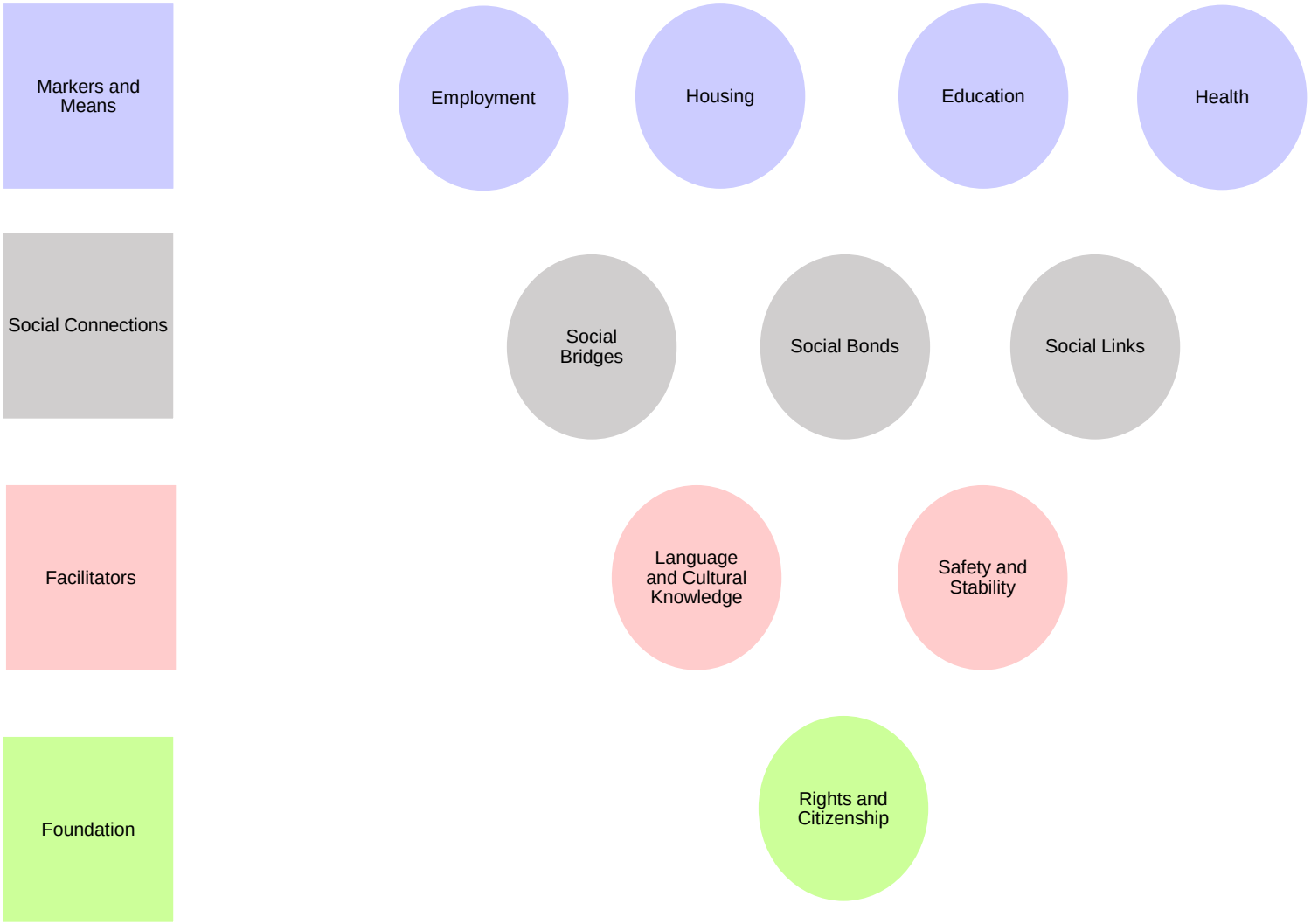


Figure 9 Indicators of Integration taken from (Home Office, 2004)

The domains of employment, housing, education and health form the markers of successful integration (ibid.). This was informed by the Council of Europe *Measurement and Indicators of Integration* (1997), which highlighted the above areas as significant spaces where successful integration could be assessed. However, in addition to being a marker or outcome of integration, Ager and Strang (2008) allocate these domains as means of integration, arguing, 'they also serve as potential means to support the achievement of integration' (p.169).
The domain of employment has been identified as a significant factor in promoting a range of benefits for refugee integration including:

> *… promoting economic independence, planning for the future, meeting members of the host society, providing opportunity to develop language skills, restoring self-esteem and encouraging self-reliance.* (ibid., p.171)

Housing is identified as important in supporting refugees' physical and mental wellbeing (ibid.). However, Ager and Strang (ibid.) found that, rather than focusing on housing conditions, their respondents were more concerned with the social and cultural impacts of housing. For example, refugees reported being able to feel settled in a neighbourhood and to establish and continue relationships with host communities as being valuable. Safety and security in their homes and neighbourhoods were also identified as important to refugees (ibid.). This echoes with the findings from Spicer (2008), suggesting that some dispersal neighbourhoods for asylum-seekers, those with high levels of unemployment and economic decline coupled with minimal prior experiences of immigration, were felt to be unsafe and isolating for asylum-seekers housed there. This is similar to the findings of Beirens, Hughes, Hek and Spicer (2007), who also reported experiences of social exclusion for refugees dispersed to areas of disadvantage with limited experience of immigration.

The domain of education is important for refugee integration in providing the skills needed 'in support of subsequent employment enabling people to become more constructive and active members of society' (Ager and Strang, 2008, p.172). This was particularly salient for refuge children and, in some cases, parents who were able to develop relationships with host communities, which were supportive in integration (ibid.). Difficulties for refugee children at school were identified in the form of insufficient support in language acquisition, difficulties in making friends and instances of bullying (ibid.). Special language provisions for children were helpful in meeting the needs of refugee children but with the disadvantage of limiting opportunities for interacting with local children (ibid.), thus diminishing opportunities to build social bridges. Access to health services not only support health outcomes, thus facilitating

active engagement in society, but also served as 'effective engagement with a key state service' (ibid., p.172), thus promoting social links.

The foundation of rights and citizenship as detailed in Ager and Strang (ibid.) echoes much of the conceptual exploration outlined in the first part of this chapter. In the UK, government policy acknowledges integration:

> *… as the process that takes place when refugees are empowered to achieve their full potential as members of British society, to contribute to the community, and become fully able to exercise the rights and responsibilities that they share with other residents.*
>
> (Home Office, 2005, p.5)

As such, the foundation of integration is conceived in a two-fold, reciprocal recognition of rights for refugees secured by the state, and responsibilities of refugees towards the state. The domains of language and cultural knowledge, and safety and security, are identified as key facilitators to effective integration (Ager and Strang, 2008). Host language acquisition is identified as central to the integration process but, with an understanding of integration as a 'two-way process', it is also important for essential services, such as healthcare, to provide translated materials and access to interpreters, especially for refugees in the early stages of settlement (ibid.). Alongside this, Ager and Strang (ibid.) identified the facilitating role of broader cultural knowledge for refugee integration. This included practical information about the locality in which they were situated, but also wider cultural expectations from the host society. Opportunities to share their own culture and to promote mutual understanding with host communities were also identified by refugees as beneficial to integration. Some refugees spoke of a sense of personal safety as paramount to feeling integrated, whilst stability in terms of accommodation was important in terms of enabling continuity in relationships but also in facilitating access to public services (ibid.). For these reasons, Ager and Strang (ibid.) identify safety and security as a key domain in facilitating refugee integration.

Social bonds, bridges and links are the remaining three domains in the *Indicators of Integration* framework (Home Office, 2004). These branches of social connection form the:

> *connective tissues' between foundational principles of citizenship and rights on one hand and public outcomes in sectors such as employment, housing, education and health…* (Ager and Strang, 2008, p.177).

Whilst the concepts of social bonds, bridges and links are contested (Portes and Landolt, 1996; Bourdieu, 1999; DeFilippis, 2001), Ager and Strang contend that they 'offer significant

explanatory value in the context of local integration' (Ager and Strang, 2008, p.178). This aspect of the framework serves as an operationalisation of Putnam's (1995; 2001) more abstract social capital theory. Social bonds, as in Putnam's work (1995; 2001), refer to relationships within like-ethnic groups and within refugee communities (Ager and Strang, 2008). Social bridges are understood as relationships between refugee communities and the host community and social links as relationships between refugee communities and wider institutions of the host society (ibid.).

Social bonds, Ager and Strang (2008) argue, were important to many refugees who:

> *valued proximity to family because this enabled them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships. Such connection played a large part in them feeling 'settled'.* (p.178)

Social bridges were reported to be important to both refugees and non-refugees as enabling them to feel 'at home' (ibid.) Friendliness in day-to-day encounters was crucial in creating a feeling of an integrated community, with committed friendships and a sense of respect further entrenching a sense of successful integration (ibid.). In the fieldwork informing Ager and Strang's conceptual framework (Home Office, 2004; Ager and Strang, 2008), both refugees and non-refugees advanced understandings of integration in terms of shared activities including sports, community groups and religious worship. The authors add:

> *The underlying principle behind such views appeared to be that if a community is integrated then people will participate without prejudice, in the activities and pastimes available to it.* (p.181)

Whilst friendly contact with local communities was more associated with a sense of safety and security on the part of refugees, a more extensive and intensive involvement with local people has been shown to be influential in promoting longer-term social and economic benefits (ibid.). The relationship of refugees to structures of state, described as 'social links', are acknowledged as difficult to establish at times, due to particular circumstances facing many refugees, such as not speaking the language or lack of familiarity with the locality (ibid.). In this regard, some refugees found it beneficial to be living in areas where refugee resettlement was more established as here it was more likely that local services had established expertise in dealing with needs specific to refugees (ibid.).

In addition to a specific focus on the domains of social connections, the language of social capital, following Putnam (1995; 2001) is present throughout the framework. For example, the domain of education is conceptualised as being of particular importance partly because it is through institutions such as schools that refugee children, and sometimes parents, are enabled to develop relationships of both bridging and bonding form. Similarly, employment offers opportunities for refugees to meet and develop relationships with others.

This approach is not without its critiques. For example, McPherson (2010) has argued against the normalizing discourse prevalent in integrationism more generally, and with the emphasis within integrationist policy that social bonds are of use only in relation to their facilitation of social bridges; this, she argues, is inevitably assimilationist. In response, Ager and Strang (2010) welcome McPherson's (ibid.) call for further research that contests this normalizing agenda through recourse to marginalized refugee experiences, but they also defend the use of social capital within the original framework as being accessible to academics and practitioners alike. My concerns are not with the framework as such; the distinction between bonds and bridges is particularly useful in this study in distinguishing between friendship groups and their connection to practices of integration from the point of view of unaccompanied minors. My concern lies with the abstraction of social capital in the Putnam (1995; 2001) tradition, which I argue lacks sufficient nuance and attention to context and power relations.

The criticisms of Putnam's (2000; 2001) conceptualisation of social capital are manifold on both empirical and theoretical fronts (e.g. DeFilippis, 2001; Arneil, 2006). I focus here on those criticisms that offer the most relevance for this thesis and its research questions, which I outline in three points.

First, the premise found in Putnam (1995; 2001) of communities of social capital is theoretically inadequate. Community is posited as the aggregate of individuals; social capital of individuals combines to form community social capital (DeFilippis, 2001). Communities, however, are not simply collections of individuals, they are 'complicated sets of social, political, cultural, and economic relationships' (DeFilippis, 2001, p.789). As DeFilippis (ibid.) argues:

> *Communities are outcomes… that affect and constrain future possibilities… no place, (a community, a region, or whatever) is solely a function of the internal attributes of the people living and working there… they are outcomes of a complex set of power-laden relationships- both internally, within the communities, and externally, between actors*

> *in the community and the rest of the world… These relations are often contentious… and are always imbued with issues of power.* (p.789)

This matters for my thesis because of the intense and often contradictory complexities of power relations surrounding integration practices for unaccompanied minors. For example, unaccompanied minors are, for the most part, subject to immigration control, which can place huge constraints upon future possibilities; without regularised immigration status, former unaccompanied minors are prevented from developing social links in the form of bank accounts, student finance or a driving licence, for example. Any conceptual framework that I develop in this chapter, therefore, needs to be able to address such complexities.

Secondly, and this relates to applications of social capital as much as in its abstracted form, the emphasis on the development of bridging capital as a facilitator of economic development is flawed (DeFilippis, 2001). This is an argument that is often advanced in the field of community development, where it is suggested that increases in levels of social bridging will address the needs of those in poor, urban communities (ibid.). In relation to integration, much contemporary policy and discourse is concerned with the development of social bridges, in order to avoid the sense of segregation and separation brought about through exclusively 'bonded but disconnected communities' (Strang and Ager, 2010, p.598). The assumption, however, that bridging capital is some sort of harbinger of economic development is not necessarily valid. For example, intensely bonded communities of wealthy and privileged individuals may lack social bridges, but they do not necessarily require them for further economic development (DeFilippis, 2001). In such cases, it is isolation, rather than connection, that serves to produce and reproduce wealth (ibid.).

Thirdly, and relatedly, Putnam's argument of civic decline does not, empirically, reflect beyond predominantly White and middle-class neighbourhoods (ibid.). It has been shown, for example, that poor, urban, black communities are not necessarily lacking in social capital. Portes (1998), for example, states:

> *Sociologists know that everyday survival in poor urban communities frequently depends on close interactions with kin and friends in similar situations. The problem is that such ties seldom reach beyond the inner city* (pp.13-14).

Economic development, personal advancement and integration owed more to relations of power and control of connections than to decontextualized levels of capital (ibid.).

Indicators of Integration 2019

The Indicators of Integration framework (2004) has been used widely in both UK and international contexts (Home Office, 2019e). An updated and revised framework was released by the Home Office in 2019 (ibid.). The 2019 framework maintained much of the structure of that of 2004 but 'with extensions to the domains and inclusion of new indicators to reflect current knowledge, priorities and data sets' (ibid., p.13).

The new framework (ibid) builds on that of 2004, with a much greater emphasis on multiplicity and further movement away from binary conceptions of integration as a 'two-way process'. There is a continuing emphasis on social cohesion and an individualization of responsibility for its realisation, although this is made applicable to multiple parties, thus seeking to resist charges of neo-assimilationism aimed at integrationist agendas (McPherson, 2010). An outline of the 2019 framework appears below (Home Office, 2019e)

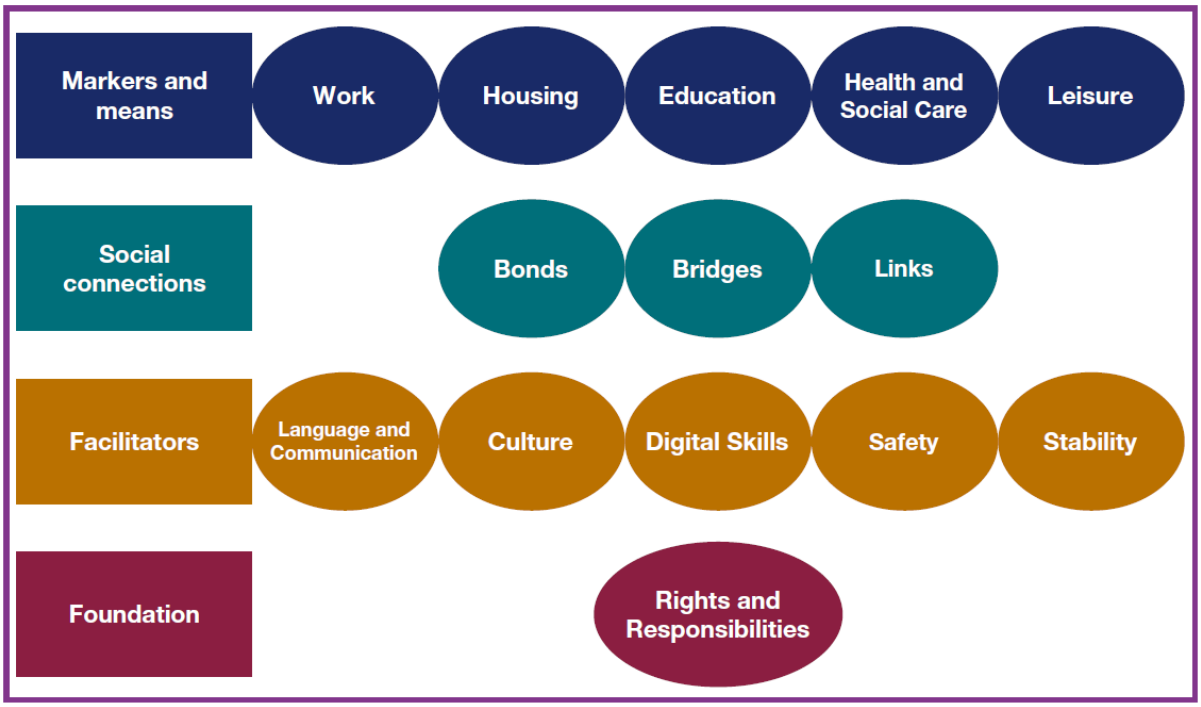


Figure 10 Indicators of Integration Framework 2019 (Home Office, 2019e)

The indicator of 'leisure', stated to 'help individuals learn more about the culture of a country or local area', is an addition to the 2004 framework (Home Office, 2019e, p.38). Suggested leisure outcomes include membership of local sports facilities and membership of a local library (ibid.). The facilitator of 'digital skills' is also a new addition. Suggested outcomes for

this indicator include '% with personal access to internet (including mobile data)' and '% over 16 with smartphone or computer' (ibid., p48).

In terms of 'Foundation', the 2019 framework speaks of 'rights and responsibilities' (Home Office, 2019e):

> *This domain addresses the extent to which members of minority groups are provided with the basis for full and equal engagement within UK society… It assesses the existence and awareness of rights and responsibilities as well as the enablement of these rights and fulfilment of responsibilities.* (ibid., p.54).

The 2019 framework includes a focus on the responsibilities of receiving communities themselves as an important mediating factor in integration of migrants (ibid.). For the most part, suggested outcome indicators are pertinent to members of migrant rather than receiving communities, including, for example, '% utilising affordable legal advice', '% reporting a sense of responsibility towards local and UK society', and '% using affordable legal advice' (ibid., p.54). Suggested outcomes indicators that reflect a concern with the responsibilities of receiving communities include, for example, '% reporting sense of equity in access to services and entitlements' and '% overall population reporting knowledge of anti-discrimination laws' (ibid., p.54). As such, within the 2019 framework, the integration of migrants involves realisation of individual responsibilities on the part of migrants, but there is recognition that this takes place, and is mediated by, a culture of inclusion and equity that is in turn also the responsibility of members of receiving communities.

In later work, Phillimore (2020) suggests that the Indicators of Integration Framework (2019e) goes some way to remedy the perceived shortcomings of the earlier model, which was found, in its implementation, to focus excessively on actions and outcomes on the part of migrants (e.g. the extent to which migrant communities mix, their educational attainment and their employment levels) to the detriment of an understanding of the conditions in which integration activities take place (Emilsson, 2015; Phillimore, 2020). Phillimore (ibid.,) writes:

> *The extensively revised framework stresses the multidimensionality, multidirectionality, shared responsibility and context-specific nature of integration, pushing focus towards the roles and responsibilities of local and national stakeholders at individual and collective levels while continuing to think about multidimensional factors that shape refugee-integration outcomes* (p.5).

There is a recognition of integration within a context of superdiversity, recognised as 'accelerating social change and temporariness, transnationalism, increasing diversification and challenges of fragmentation and fluidity' (Grzymala-Kazolwski and Phillimore, 2018, p.8).

In this section, I have set out the relationship of social capital to refugee integration and explored some of the criticisms of the conceptual framework employed in this field, as well as updated revisions to the Indicators of Integration framework (Home Office, 2019e) This has centred on the subject of those who have been granted refugee status and, although some literature is attentive to children in families, for the most part it pertains to adult refugees. In the next section, I shift the focus to the context surrounding unaccompanied minors.

INTEGRATION AND UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

I draw attention here to the limitations of the integration model I have described above in respect of unaccompanied minors. I centre this discussion on the statutory provisions for children, and wider societal expectations of childhood.

Statutory Provision for Unaccompanied Minors

As children, unaccompanied minors are subject to a form of statutory provision that differs significantly from adult asylum seekers. Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) recognizes the right of every child to education. In England, all children aged five to 18 have an entitlement to education irrespective of immigration status (Ott and O'Higgins, 2019). The Children and Social Work Act (2017) through its Corporate Parenting Principles, obliges local authorities in England to take necessary action to ensure looked after children 'to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work'. There are thus responsibilities on the part of the state towards unaccompanied minors over and above those for adult asylum seekers. A conceptual framework of integration relevant to this thesis, therefore, needs to address the relevance of structures for looked-after children as well as statutory formal education.

Integration and Looked-After Children

Unaccompanied minors are cared for by the relevant local authority as looked-after children. This places a number of responsibilities on the local authority towards unaccompanied minors, including a duty to safeguard and protect, to find appropriate accommodation and other legal duties (Department for Education, 2017b, p.9). Literature in this area focusses on the protection and wellbeing of unaccompanied minors (e.g. Barrie and Mendes, 2011; Horgan et al., 2011; Derluyn, 2018; Horgan and Ní Raghallaigh, 2019). Within this, there are implicit

understandings of local authority care as a space of integration in terms of relationships with peers and with foster carers, and in terms of expectations and parameters of childhood.

There is literature in this field that centres on the opportunities foster care may provide for relationships that can be beneficial for unaccompanied minors during resettlement. Abunimah and Blower (2010) argue that foster care can provide continuity and opportunities to develop relationships within families. Foster care can also help to build relationships with adults and 'prosocial institutions in the community' such as community venues, churches and msque (Horgan and Ní Raghallaigh, 2019, p.100). There is also research revealing the advantages of forms of accommodation other than foster care, such as supported accommodation (e.g. Wade et al., 2012). Systems of hostel provision have the advantage of providing a ready-made support network of peers (Horgan and Ní Raghallaigh, 2019). There is also evidence that short-term residential care, particularly immediately upon arrival, can be beneficial for young people, who are able to feel safe in the company of other young people (Wade et al., 2012).

Alongside this, there is also evidence that some unaccompanied minors moving from residential care to foster families have struggled with the relative quiet of the private family home (Ní Raghallaigh, 2013). Kaukko and Wernesjö (2017) conducted research with unaccompanied minors accommodated in a group home in Sweden and found some young people were resentful of the positions of dependence on adult supervision in which they were situated; this was particularly the case for those young people who had previously had duties and responsibilities that may, from a majority world perspective, be considered 'adult' (ibid.).

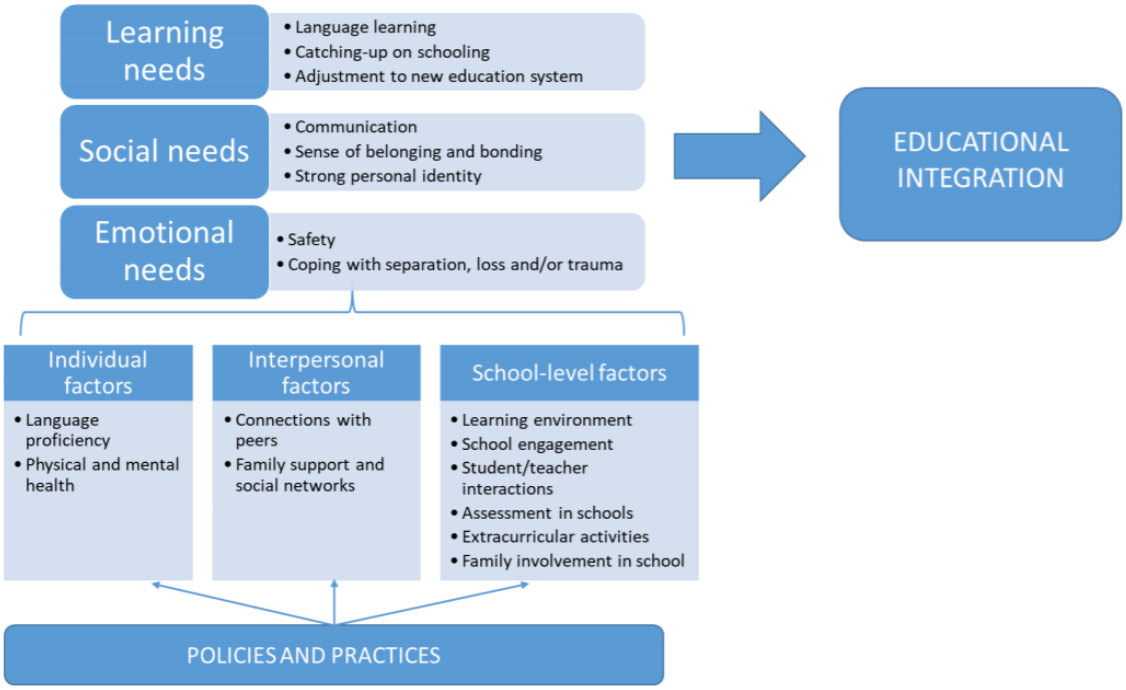
The conceptual framework of integration for unaccompanied minors needs to be able to account for young people's experiences as looked-after children. In the space below, I turn to the issue of integration within statutory education. This, along with the structures for looked-after children, forms a key structure informing integration for unaccompanied minors.

Integration in Education

Literature pertaining to asylum-seeking children and structures of education stresses the role of schools and colleges in facilitating integration (Pinson and Arnot, 2010; Ott and O'Higgins, 2019). In examining the needs of refugee children and the factors that promote their integration, Cerna (2019) 'proposes a holistic model of integration in education that responds to the learning, social and emotional needs of refugee students' (p.4). In this model, refugee children have needs that must be met prior to successful integration, such as the need to overcome interrupted schooling, adjusting to a new education system, the 'need to bond and feel a sense of belonging' and the 'need to develop a strong personal identity' (ibid., pp.24-25). Alongside this, the meeting of such needs is informed by various factors such as host

language proficiency and mental and physical health at an individual level, interpersonal factors such as friendships, and school-level factors such as an inclusive learning environment, teacher/student interaction and extra-curricular activities (ibid., pp.22-32). This model is summarised below:

Figure 11 Holistic model for the educational integration of refugee children (Cerna, 2019)



The model above in Figure 11 (ibid.) depicts the relationship between the needs of refugee children, the factors which inform the meeting of these needs, and the polices and practices that shape these factors in turn, such as separate or integrated provision for new arrivals, for example. Cerna (2019) suggests that:

> *Educational integration of refugee children can take place if all (or at least most of) their learning, social and emotional needs are addressed.* (p.33)

This model of education is useful in developing a conceptual framework with which to interpret and understand the integration of unaccompanied minors, because it is attentive to a major aspect of the specific structure within which unaccompanied minors are enmeshed; any framework of integration needs to account for the space of formal statutory integration. Cerna's

(2019) model is particularly useful in that it approaches integration holistically, relating the needs of refugee children to wider policies and practices, and envisaging such needs beyond immediate teaching and learning; school is a social and emotional space as much as a curricular space. I move now to structure of the asylum system and consider the ways in which this informs integration for unaccompanied minors in the UK.

Integration and the Asylum System

A positive asylum decision brings with it a legal status providing, for example, residency rights and access to employment, education and health-care (da Lomba, 2010). Failure to attain leave to remain can expose asylum seekers to the risk of detention and removal (Webber, 2019). Consequently, the integration of asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors, is heavily mediated by the outcome of the asylum process. Systems of asylum have been criticised for their role in undermining integration (Phillimore, 2020). For instance, dispersal systems may situate asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors, in areas of the country lacking appropriate resources and facilities (Phillimore, 2020). Also, asylum seekers may wait years for a decision and there is evidence that lengthy delays in the asylum system can negatively impact employment outcomes in the long term (Hainmueller et al., 2016).

In the UK, leave to remain tends to be given initially on a temporary basis for five years, which has a restrictive impact on integration outcomes (Phillimore, 2020). Stewart and Mulvey (2013p. 1034) suggest:

> *'It could be argued that temporary status is not compatible with the desire to have active citizens engaged in all aspects of economic, social and political life'*

The temporary nature of leave to remain can also build on the psychological damage inflicted by prolonged periods of waiting for an asylum decision (Grace et al., 2018).

The concept of structural violence is one employed widely by academics and activists to investigate and explore the asylum system and its effects upon those seeking asylum (e.g. Webber, 2012; Canning, 2017; Webber, 2018; Canning, 2019; Webber, 2019; Bhatia, 2020; Campbell, 2020; Canning et al., 2020). Structural violence, or indirect violence, is a term attributed to Galtung (1969). He writes:

> *If there is a sender, an actor who intends these consequences of violence, then we may talk about <u>direct</u> violence; if not, about indirect violence or <u>structural</u> violence… The position taken here is that <u>indirect violence = structural violence.</u> Indirect violence comes from the social structure itself- between humans, between sets of humans*

> *(societies), between sets of societies (alliances, regions) in the world.* (Galtung, 1996, p.2)

With regards to the asylum system, Canning (2017) states, 'the outcomes of macro-level decisions, legislation and policy implementation and subsequent harmful practices are not accidental or unpredicted, but deliberately decided' (p.48). These practices relate specifically to political agendas intended to maintain border controls and reduce asylum applications (ibid.).

Age determination is one practice of structural violence specific to the experiences of unaccompanied minors (Campbell, 2020). It exists alongside practices generic to asylum seekers of all ages, including prolonged periods of waiting for an asylum decision (Mayblin et al., 2020). Unaccompanied minors must also meet the same evidentiary requirements as their adult counterparts in order to meet a credibility threshold established by the asylum system (Campbell, 2020).

Research from Campbell (2020) reveals that, contrary to its responsibilities as a State Party to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), the UK consistently fails to prioritise the best interests of the child[11] in asylum cases; instead, the best interests of the child are subordinated to immigration control. Whilst some unaccompanied minors are given temporary protection until their 18th birthday, others are refused protection as a result of age disputation and are subjected to intrusive and repeated examinations and assessments in the process (Campbell, 2020). Alongside this, standards of 'credibility' are often reliant upon 'adult-centric' assumptions about children that leave such children without the protection to which they are entitled (ibid.).

A positive asylum decision is integral to the successful integration of an unaccompanied minor, as outlined by Home Office policy and practice (2004, 2019e). Yet the system of seeking asylum is in itself antagonistic towards such processes and outcomes.

In the next section, I move from an exploration of the structures mediating the integration of unaccompanied minors to a conceptual exploration of the ways in which the young men are themselves active in defining their own needs, in working to ensure that these needs are met and in defining themselves what 'successful integration' entails. I suggest that such a conceptual exploration is manifested in Kohli's (2011) conceptualisation of safety, belonging and success trajectories for unaccompanied minors.

[11] The four core principles of the UNCRC (1989) are "non-discrimination (Art.2), devotion to the best interests of the child (Art.3), the right to life, survival and development (Art.6) and respect for the views of the child (Art.12)." (Campbell, 2020, p.5))

Safety, Belonging, and Success

The three elements of safety, belonging, and success are used in Kohli's (2011) work to conceptualise how unaccompanied minors move away from their country of origin to a new sense of 'home'. This model, combined with Ager and Strang's (Home Office, 2004), gives an ideal framework for empirical enquiry. Kohli (2011) provides the conceptual framework to explore the psycho-social elements of young people's resettlement, focusing on ways in which young people themselves may act to build a place of safety, how relationships and articulations of self are fluid and changing, and how wider structural and political factors, notably immigration control, inform resettlement.

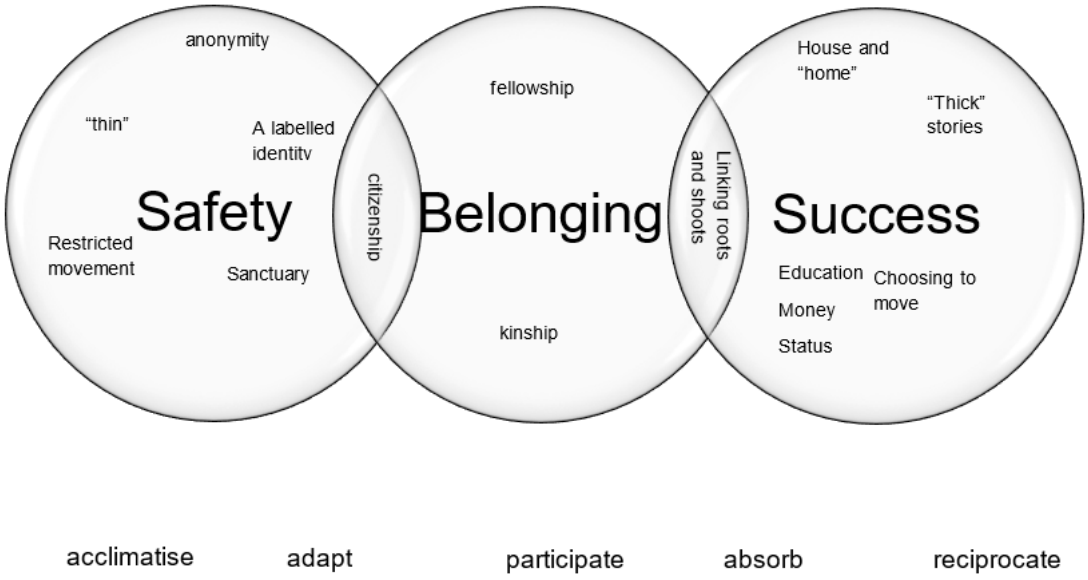


Figure 12 Trajectories of Safety, Belonging and Success taken from (Kohli, 2011, p.314)

The first trajectory identified by Kohli (ibid.) is 'safety', where unaccompanied minors are yet to acquire a sense of psychological, legal and practical security. As such, the young people often relate their own stories in 'thin[12]' terms: 'often foreshortened and distilled accounts of suffering that fit the legal definitions of seeking refugee status' (ibid., p.314). Research

[12] 'thin' stories here refers to brief, succinct accounts that provide a linear narrative, a neat 'beginning, middle and end', that fit the requirements of refugee status (Kohli, 2011, p.314)

demonstrates that young people begin to feel safe, aside from attaining a legal right to abode, through day-to-day patterns and continuity, through access to good education and medical care, and through the kindnesses and attentions of people who, as Kohli (ibid.) writes 'understand that there are some of their worlds that no one has permission to enter while they wait for the asylum decision' (p.317). There are interesting parallels here with the findings from Ní Raghallaigh (2013) regarding young people's silences and secrecy, suggesting that high levels of social connection may in fact be inappropriate where a young person feels unsafe. It may in fact feel safer at this point to refrain from social integration to an extent and to rely on 'thin' relationships, particularly when those relationship are of a bridging nature, which might otherwise feel too risky for the time-being. As Kohli (2011) writes: 'a safe life takes time to grow back' (p.317) and the young people themselves are instrumental in making it grow. Kohli (ibid.) explains:

> *As time passes, the capacity to regroup practically and psychologically is based on holding on to a broad sense of solidarity that extends to political and religious loyalties and affiliations from the past and to trustworthy people in the present, and the wish for an ordinary family life, if not now, then in the future.* (p.318).

As such, the young people themselves move from seeking a space of 'safety' to one of 'belonging'. Joining in with others in day-to-day life can help build a sense of belonging (Miller et al., 2008) and involvement in formal networks, such as schools, can help unaccompanied minors form attachments (Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007). Meanwhile, research with refugee children undertaken by Blackwell and Melzak (2000) shows that distressing experiences can be mitigated with the presence of an adult companion as part of a protective network along with space to make their own decisions and continuity with past habits, such as eating home food (Williamson, 1998). Ní Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) also found that religious faith provided a framework of continuity between past and present.

The approach here to understanding how unaccompanied minors moving towards a sense of belonging places greater emphasis on a sense of continuity than that found within the *Indicators of Integration* (Home Office, 2004). Ager and Strang (2008; 2010) were clear that their inclusion of social bonds in the framework was indicative of rejection of assimilationist thinking. However, the models of 'safety' and movements towards 'belonging' place greater emphasis on young people linking together and forming continuities between the past, present and the future. Ager and Strang (2008) mark 'rights and citizenship' as foundational to their conceptual framework. They draw on Home Office (2005) articulation of integration as involving refugees exercising rights and responsibilities that they share with the host society. The path of 'safety', outlined in Kohli's (2011) work, illustrated above in Figure 11 , is much

more attentive to the problem faced by the majority of unaccompanied minors who are given only a limited form of leave to remain. In such a case,

> *There is a broad sense that a life in waiting is contingent, hedged with hope and worry, and that this sense of an occluded future echoes uncertainty about the past − other family members about whom there is no news, with whom there is little or no contact.* (p.316)

The paths of both 'safety' and 'belonging' as outlined by Kohli (2011) show that young people are active in creating their own safety and their own sense of belonging through building continuity of life past, present and future. For this to occur, young people need a sense of a secure and safe future, rather than a 'life in waiting' (p.316). This sense of continuity goes beyond social bonds; relationships with co-nationals or other asylum seekers are perhaps partially significant to creating a sense of belonging. Continuity is, however, also found in religious practice, in home food, in finding a way, long-term, to live one's daily life with a sense of authenticity. The role here of a kind and supportive adult is to allow space for the young person to make their own decisions and to maintain privacy. The concept of social capital here is useful, therefore, to a point. Without a more focused awareness of the primacy of feeling safe, and the necessity of, in Kohli's (2011, p.314) language, linking 'roots and shoots', the emphasis on bridges or bonds feels rather limited.

In the path of 'success', Kohli (2011) describes aspirations on the part of unaccompanied minors for educational and material attainment. In some cases, investment from family members who funded the journey to the UK prompts a sense of responsibility and obligation to succeed educationally (ibid.). Existing literature demonstrates unaccompanied minors actively navigating towards resources and people who can assist their educational attainment. Ott and O'Higgins (2019) also refer to a tendency amongst unaccompanied minors towards high aspirations and the placing of a high value on education. However, the paths of safety, belonging and success are, as Kohli (2011) argues, interdependent. The extant literature demonstrates that, if offered secure resettlement, unaccompanied minors tend to do well educational and tend to navigate themselves towards people and behaviours who will assist this educational attainment (ibid.). Without safety and the capacity this brings to establish continuity between the old and the new, achieving any sense of success is profoundly difficult.

In the remaining section of this chapter, I offer a reconciliation of the models of integration informed by Ager and Strang (2004) and the paths to resettlement proposed by Kohli (2011).

A Reconciliation of Models of Integration

In Figure 13, below, I illustrate the reconciliation of models of integration I have developed in this chapter. This brings together the concept of social capital advanced by Ager and Strang (2004), in the form of social bonds, social bridges and social links, together with the trajectories of resettlement of unaccompanied minors devised by Kohli that highlights the notions of safety, belonging and success (2011). Social capital is a useful conceptual tool with which to examine the nature and fluctuation of relationships of unaccompanied minors. These relationships are integral to understanding integration because they mediate daily experiences of resettlement in all social domains, such as education and accommodation, and across private and public spheres more broadly. Kohli's (2011) model takes the conceptual framework further, as it focuses specifically on the experiences of unaccompanied minors and the ways in which the young people are themselves active in negotiating, creating and sustaining trajectories of safety, belonging and success. This allows for a more personalized and nuanced understanding of integration from the point of view of the young people themselves and, moreover, fosters a more explicit focus on the psychosocial elements of integration as they affect and influence the young people on a day-to-day basis.

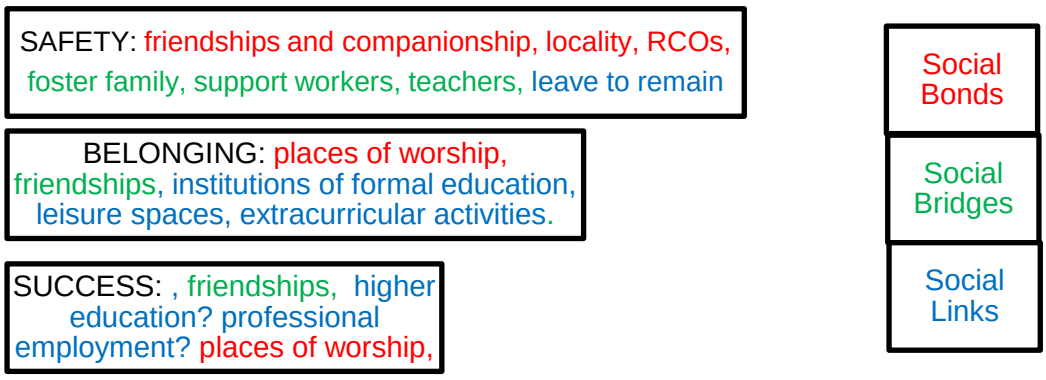


Figure 13 (author's own) Reconciliation of Ager and Strang's Indicators of Integration (Home Office, 2004) and Kohli's (2011) Trajectories of Resettlement for Unaccompanied Minors.

In Figure 13, above, I have set out the three elements of social capital - bonds, bridges and links - on the right-hand side. The trajectories of 'safety', 'belonging' and 'success' are placed on the left. I have employed the different coloured fonts to signal which aspects of 'safety', 'belonging' and 'success' can be identified as bonds, bridges and links. At the beginning of a

time of resettlement, the young people are responding to a need to feel safe and are active in creating and sustaining that feeling. At this point, relationships in the form of social bonds are particularly important and prominent, offering a common language, a sense of familiarity in an unfamiliar context and perhaps a sense of companionship and shared experiences of acculturation. Relationships of social bridges also feature in creating safety, including with adult service providers such as support workers or foster carers who may offer practical help to the young people. Ultimately, leave to remain, the social link with the state that provides the young people with a degree of certainty regarding their immigration status, is integral to trajectories of safety for unaccompanied minors.

As time moves on, unaccompanied minors build on foundations of safety to create trajectories of belonging. This may involve friendships based on social bonds assuming less significance, as new friendships based on social bridges are formed. The young people also form ties of belonging, in the form of social links, through college or school, through attending leisure activities such as sports teams, and other extracurricular activities. Social bonds may be sustained through places of worship. Trajectories of success for young people feature a number of social links; this may include access to higher education or the labour market.

The reconciliation of models of integration I have outlined above in Figure 13 serves as an ideal type. At this point in the thesis, instances of social bonds, bridges and links are informed by existing literature pertaining to the integration of unaccompanied minors in a UK context. In Chapter 8, I return to this model of reconciliation and apply it analytically in light of the empirical material from my data collection that follows.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have examined the concept of integration in relation to various models of national cohesion. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine and build understandings of how unaccompanied minors navigate and negotiate integration within the context of contemporary national cohesion policy and discourse in the UK. For this purpose, I have turned to the concept of social capital, which offers some scope in developing understandings of how unaccompanied minors, as agents operating within particular structures of care and control, understand and practise integration. I thus outlined a tradition of social capital employed in models of refugee integration (Ager and Strang, 2008; Strang and Ager, 2010) that drew on Putnam's (2001) conceptualisation based on individual or aggregate assets, rather than the work of Bourdieu (1986), which focused on relationships of relative power. The prevalence of the concept of social capital, drawing on Putnam (1995), is indicative of a broader trend across

social policy and beyond, which individualises responsibility. The critical perspective of social capital as advanced by Bourdieu (1986) is however crucial in understanding relations of power and structures of disempowerment that mediate experiences of integration.

The *Indicators of Integration* (Home Office, 2004) advanced in this chapter, utilises the concept of social capital in conjunction with other means and markers, recognising integration as both a process and outcome and also as a 'two-way process' for refugees and host communities alike. It is thus advantageous to employ this framework for the purposes of my research, in that it promotes understandings of context and shifting relationships of power.

To this point, the model of integration proposed requires application to the specificities of integration for unaccompanied minors, who are positioned within the regulatory structures of normative childhood. Most notably, this is evident within the domains of formal statutory education and the care system. Any understanding of integration therefore needs to account for the relationships established and sustained within these domains, and the ways in which the young men are active in negotiating these structures. I suggest that a model of integration combining Kohli's (2011) approach to trajectories of resettlement for unaccompanied minors, with aspects of the model proffered by Ager and Strang (Home Office, 2004) is advantageous in terms of capturing the means and markers of integration, but also the ways in which the young men act out their own practices of integration that relate to safety, belonging and success; this is the model I have proposed in Figure 13.

In the next chapter I outline the methodology employed in my research.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 has indicated a significant gap in knowledge surrounding the lived experiences of integration of unaccompanied minors and insight into the ways in which these young people exercise agency in negotiating the processes associated with asylum, resettlement and integration. Whilst the recognition of children as active participants in society is widespread across social science disciplines (Tisdall and Punch, 2012), a critical investigation into the complexities of children's agency with regard to integration practices of unaccompanied minors forges new terrain.

Research around children's agency, particularly from the majority world, has begun to interrogate more critically commitments to participation, agency and child rights espoused within the so-called 'new' sociology of childhood (ibid.). My research continues in this vein, adopting an ethnographic method. My approach respects the voices and experiences of participants, adults and children, and seeks methods that facilitate a range of articulations and representations.

This chapter is structured in four parts. Following the presentation of research questions, Part 2 outlines my approach in terms of ontology, epistemology and methodology; I locate this project within the qualitative tradition, drawing on the concept of crystallization as the construction of a multiplicity of truth representations (Ellingson, 2009). Part 3 is concerned with research design, methods, and positionality. In Part 4, I consider the ethical issues, including a reflexive focus in terms of power dynamics and meaningful informed consent.

This research project aimed to develop understandings of integration as a daily practice and as experienced by unaccompanied minors in the asylum system. It is focussed on two key questions:

1. How do unaccompanied minors practise integration into British society and how are they agentive in doing so?
2. How is the integration of unaccompanied minors understood and addressed in the policy and practice of front-line service providers?

In the ensuing text, I explain the means by which I investigated these research questions. I aim to demonstrate the fluidity of the fieldwork over its course of 11 months and the sense of

change and fluctuation involved in the process, as I responded to and acted in relationship with the young men over time. Firstly, I explain my ontological and epistemological approach.

ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

My commitment 'to seeing the world from the point of view of the actor' has directed me to a qualitative approach (Bryman, 1984 , p.77). The research questions direct the enquiry within a broadly qualitative tradition understood as:

> *… a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible*
>
> (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.4)

The theoretical framing of this research project and the choice of methodology are informed by my own epistemological positioning, my convictions as a researcher as to what constitutes knowledge of the social world, and my positionality in relation to this programme of enquiry. Below I set out the theoretical positions regarding the constitution of knowledge of the social world that are relevant to this thesis.

Rejecting A Positivist Paradigm

The positivist paradigm allied with quantitative methods presumes an objective reality 'out there to be studied, captured and understood' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p.14). Within this tradition, research consists of the testing of theories through the generation of hypotheses; (social) science should be conducted in such a way that is value free. The positivist paradigm upholds a distinction between 'scientific' knowledge, as value-free and the legitimate focus of (social) scientific enquiry , and 'common-sense' knowledge as subjective and, therefore, an illegitimate focus (O'Connell Davidson and Layder, 1994, p.2). The ontological underpinnings of this thesis, however, consider reality as such to be contingent upon relations of power embedded in particular social, political, religious, economic and historical contexts. This is an approach to knowledge grounded in subjectivism, which is opposed to the objectivist tradition of positivism particularly associated with quantitative methods. Proponents of subjectivism hold that, whilst the social world is unknowable, 'the researcher constructs an impression of the world as he or she sees it, without regard for whether this subjective impression corresponds to any reality beyond' (2008, p.841). This means engaging with realities in their multiple forms rather than searching for one 'true' representation which, it is argued, is not knowable. Rather than rejecting that which is considered subjective or value-laden, it is these very subjectivities and values I seek to explore and understand. This research focuses on the lived experiences of young men who are frequently in positions of vulnerability and

marginalization; the embeddedness of their understandings, values, truths and expertise is an integral richness to the research project, bringing understandings from situations and experiences that would otherwise go unheard.

Constructivism and Interpretivism

Subjectivism is closely related to the constructivist paradigm, which also disavows 'the existence of an external objective reality independent of an individual from which knowledge may be collected or gained' (Costantino, 2008, p.118). This paradigm saw a shift in focus from a preoccupation with explanations of phenomena (*Erklärung*) typical of the natural sciences, to a concern with understanding (*Verstehen*) (ibid). This shift was referred to as the interpretive turn (ibid.) and proponents of it held that the positivist approach is inappropriate for the study of human society (Costantino, 2008). By contrast, the constructivist paradigm, holds to a relativist ontology whereby realities, in a plural sense, 'exist in the form of multiple mental constructions', which are 'socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them' (Lincoln et al., 2018, p.114). Rather than seeking to demonstrate laws of natural phenomena, the constructivist paradigm seeks to understand and interpret through the meaning of phenomena (ibid.). The quality of research is determined through concepts of authenticity ('isomorphic to some reality') and trustworthiness ('related to the ways others construct their social worlds') (Lincoln et al., 2018, p.138).

In the context of my research a constructivist approach sought to understand, for example, the meanings articulated by the young men in regard to integration, friendships and relationships, family, home, place and space. I sought to understand the multifaceted realities of the young men in regard to integration through dialogue and through joint construction/reconstruction of the meaning of lived experiences (Lincoln et al., 2018). I intended both process and outcome of this thesis to engage on the basis of an ethos of solidarity with unaccompanied minors and asylum-seekers more generally; that is, to construct knowledge and understanding that would inform, even challenge, policy and practice to better meet the needs of unaccompanied minors and to facilitate a forum that would give voice to experiences of the young men. This is consistent with an interpretivist tradition, which advances a call to action as 'a meaningful and important outcome of inquiry processes' (ibid., p.134).

I have located this thesis in what Denzin and Lincoln (2018) refer to as 'sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community' (ibid., p.3). How might this research be a 'site for critical conversations' as mentioned above? This research project aimed to form a space of alternative narratives to

tenacious models of the developmental child that fail to engage with children's experiences as being worthy of study in and of themselves; I aimed to listen to the young men who were participants in this study as experts in their own lives. I also aimed to move away from expectations of a 'universal childhood' that are in fact contextually dependent, and instead to learn from participants about their experiences of growing up in a variety of contexts. In evoking co-construction of knowledge, I sought to engage with democratic practices. I also strived for a relationship of reciprocity between researcher and participants. Whereas ethical considerations for research may centre on the notion of harm minimization, reciprocity involves co-developing a relationship 'with participants that not only respects, but also promotes their autonomous agency' with responsibility on the part of the researcher 'to try to understand and engage with the different perspectives and life experiences of research participants and to construct research relationships that are responsive to their needs and values' (Mackenzie et al., 2007, pp.300-301). There is a commitment to dialogue here, that steers away from the objectification of the other as a point of (social) scientific gaze.

Crystallization

The interpretive turn in the social sciences has produced a 'wide variety of creative forms of representation of qualitative findings, including narratives, poetry, personal essays, performances, and mixed genre/multimedia texts as alternatives to the hegemony of traditional social scientific research reporting strategies that pervaded the academy' (Ellingson, 2009, p.1). Such works have rejected claims to objectivity and conceptualise the researcher as situated and implicated in the construction of meaning (ibid). Ellingson (ibid.) encompasses the varieties of qualitative research within the analogy of the crystal, which proved useful in this thesis. Ellingson describes crystallization thus:

> *Crystallization combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerability and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them* (ibid., p.4)

Crystallization proposes a continuum from positivism through to radical interpretivism, which is understood as scholarship through art. This framework is displayed, in adapted form, below in Figure 13. There is, a 'vast middle ground', where most qualitative researchers situate themselves (ibid., p.5). In addition, crystallization proposes a significant degree of researcher reflexivity in the research process. It accommodates demands for 'thick description' in knowledge offering a depth not just through compilation but also in terms of different forms of

representation, organisation and analysis of details (Geertz, 1975; Ellingson, 2009). This allows the researcher to construct representations of multiple realities, incorporating their own positionality as well as 'contrasting or conflicting points of view, patterns, and exceptions' (Ellingson, 2009, p.11). There is thus space for the inclusion of participants' own voices, which are respected as legitimate accounts of their experiences.

Qualitative Continuum			
	Art/Impressionist	**Middle-Ground Approaches**	**Science/Realist**
Goals	To unravel accepted truths To construct personal truths	To construct situated knowledges To explore the typical To generate description and understanding To trouble the taken-for-granted	To discover objective truth To generalize to larger population To explain really 'out there' To generate scientific knowledge To predict and control behaviour
Questions	How do we/can we cope with life? What is unique about my or another's experience?	How do participants understand their world? How do the participants and author co-construct a world?	What does it mean from the researcher's point of view? What is the relationship among factors? What behaviours can be predicted?
Methods	Autoethnography Interactive interviewing Performance Visual arts	Semi-structured interviewing Focus groups Thematic, metaphoric, and narrative analysis Participatory action research	Coding textual data Random sampling Frequency of behaviours Measurement Surveys Structured Interviews
Writing	Use of first-person voice Stories Personal reflections Multivocal, multi-genre texts	Use of first-person voice Incorporation of brief narratives in research reports Usually a single interpretation, with implied partiality and positionality Some consideration of researcher's standpoint(s)	Use of passive voice Claim single authoritative interpretation Meaning summarized in tables and charts Objectivity and minimization of bias highlighted

Researcher	Researcher as the main focus, or as much the focus of research as other participants	Participants are main focus, but researcher's positionality is key to forming findings	Researcher is presented as irrelevant to results
Vocabularies	Artistic/interpretive: personal, ambiguity, change, improvisation, process	Social Constructionist/Postpositivist: intersubjectivity, thick description, co-creation of meaning	Positivist: deductive, tested, measurement, variables, control, generalizability, validity, reliability
Criteria	Do stories ring true, resonate, engage, move?	Clarity and openness of processes Clear reasoning and use of support Evidence of researcher's reflexivity	Authoritative rules Specific criteria for data, Proscribed methodological processes

Figure 14 Qualitative Continuum (Ellingson, 2009, p.7)

Prior to commencing fieldwork , I planned on employing participatory methods based on Boal's (2002, 2008) Theatre of the Oppressed. Almost immediately on starting fieldwork, I recognised the necessity of substantial changes to my proposed methods. This entailed a shift to the left of the crystallization continuum as I moved away from the 'middle ground' towards a more artistic and impressionistic orientation, embracing aspects of autobiography. I explore these changes and the reasons for making them below, after setting out the research design. The end result is an amalgam of voices and representations analogous to the image of the crystal used herein, with parts situated towards the centre left of the crystallization continuum (Ellingson, 2009) above.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

In this section, I first set out the details of the fieldwork, with names and identifiers anonymised for reasons of confidentiality. This includes some background into the locations of the fieldwork as well as the various organisations involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers, who often served as gatekeepers in the research process. I include here a timeline of the fieldwork, details of the interviews that took place towards the end of the fieldwork period, and the continued employment of participant observation.

Details of Fieldwork

The fieldwork took place from January 2017 to November 2017 in a city in Southern England that, for the purposes of anonymity, I have called Rothport. This city has a relatively long history of receiving asylum-seekers, as it has been a dispersal centre for adult asylum-seekers since the policy of dispersal was initiated in the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999). Neighbouring local authorities, however, were beginning to receive Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children for the first time in 2016, following a government decision to begin dispersal of unaccompanied minors. Previously, unaccompanied minors had been exempted from dispersal programmes. These neighbouring local authorities, unlike Rothport itself, had little experience of ethnic and cultural diversity and were new to providing for the needs of unaccompanied minors. As such, these young men were accessing services within the city centre, which was reachable by public transport.

Timeline of Fieldwork

I have summarised the details of the fieldwork in Figure 15 below. This was a process that grew organically, in dialogue with the young men and with adults working for different organisations that were charged with their care and support in some way. My concern throughout was to establish myself as a safe and sustained presence at various organisations and places in the city, allowing relationships to grow over time and trust to

develop. In the table below, RYW refers to Rothport Youth Works[13], which ran a weekly drop-in youth night for young people new to the city; it was specifically targeted at unaccompanied minors, but a range of young people attended. RRS (Rothport Refugee Solidarity) was the largest of the refugee charities operating in Rothport, with various drop-in, support and signposting services. ArtReach was another charity, which provided art therapy to refugees and asylum seekers, including a weekly session for unaccompanied minors at RYW. Frontiers was a charity working with refugees and asylum seekers operating from the Catholic church. Young People's Housing Services (YPHS) was a charity contracted by 'Broomshire' local authority to meet the social needs of unaccompanied minors aged 16 and over. RAP (Rothport Accommodation Providers) was a charity working specifically with asylum-seekers who had been refused asylum and were destitute with no accommodation; RAP ran drop-in sessions, provided hosting opportunities across the city and also owned a men's hostel in the east of the city. Calais L'Auberge des Migrants and Refugee Community Kitchen[14] (RCK) are charities who were working with refugees and asylum seekers in and around Calais. ESOL refers to English for Speakers of Other Languages, which many of the unaccompanied minors were studying at the college in Rothport and elsewhere.

January 2017	Meeting with Joshua from Rothport Youth Works (RYW) and arranging weekly volunteering at weekly drop-in Arranging volunteering role with Young People's Housing and Support (YPHS) Meeting with various individuals connected with asylum and refugee support in Rothport city including Frontiers, a trauma specialist working with refugee women and Rothport Refugee Solidarity (RRS). Meeting young men seeking asylum, including Zoran, for whom I was appointed mentor Meeting with Art Therapy charity, ArtReach, who began running art therapy sessions for unaccompanied minors in collaboration with RYW Began attending drop-in sessions at RRS, Frontiers and RAP		Participant Observation at RYW weekly drop-in Ongoing mentoring relationship with Zoran Attending reflective practice organised by YPHS
February 2017	Familiarising Zoran with refugee/asylum-seeker provisions and activities in the city while he awaits college placement	Participant Observation at art therapy sessions	

[13] I have used pseudonyms for all places and organisations, unless otherwise indicated.
[14] I have not used pseudonyms here as organisations were away from the fieldwork site and do not identify the participants in any way.

<table>
<tr><td>March 2017</td><td colspan="2">Trip to Calais L'Auberge des Migrants and Refugee Community Kitchen (RCK) as volunteer</td><td rowspan="4">run by ArtReach in collaboration with RYW Including supervision</td><td rowspan="8"></td></tr>
<tr><td>April 2017</td><td>Trip to London with Zoran and Serhat</td><td rowspan="2">Mentoring Training with YPHS</td></tr>
<tr><td>May 2017</td><td>Interim report for YPHS: interviews with support workers working with unaccompanied minors and drafting interim report</td></tr>
<tr><td>June 2017</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>July 2017</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Photography Workshops with UASCs at RYW</td><td rowspan="2">Attending drop-ins at Frontiers and talking with UASCs

Meeting with UASCs to assist with ESOL and Maths</td></tr>
<tr><td>August 2017</td></tr>
<tr><td>September 2017</td><td colspan="2"></td><td rowspan="3">Semi-structured interviews with adults</td></tr>
<tr><td>October 2017</td><td colspan="2">Semi-structured interviews with young men
Photography Exhibition</td></tr>
<tr><td>November 2017</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

Figure 15 Details of Fieldwork

Gaining Access

I was able to engage with unaccompanied minors through volunteering with two organisations. RYW, based in the city centre, were running a weekly drop-in evening for young people new to the city, most of whom were seeking asylum or had received Leave to Remain. I volunteered once a week at this drop-in. The other organisation for which I volunteered, known here as Young People's Housing and Support (YPHS) had offices in the city centre and in a neighbouring local authority. I volunteered as a mentor for young people arriving in the neighbouring local authority, named here as 'Broomshire'. My role extended beyond individual mentoring as I became a point of contact between the two organisations and began to spend time with various young men seeking asylum, not just the young man for whom I was appointed mentor.

A lecturer at the University of Bath had introduced me to one of the youth workers responsible for running the drop-in at RYW, Joshua, who invited me to volunteer at the drop-in. I had become aware that YPHS were beginning to provide support for unaccompanied minors as I was involved generally in refugee and asylum-seeker solidarity

movements in the city; I therefore emailed YPHS and enquired about volunteering opportunities.

My role with YPHS expanded over the fieldwork period and I would often meet with other young men supported by YPHS to assist them with college work or additional ESOL and Maths. My weekly attendance at the RYW drop-in enabled me to spend time with other young men and report back to the YPHS monthly meetings

Participant Observation

Volunteering at RYW and YPHS gave me the opportunity to engage in sustained participant observation. During the weekly drop-ins at RYW, I would join the young men in a range of activities. Sometimes the young men would be asked to cook food from their home cultures- often rice and vegetables- and I would offer myself as kitchen assistant. There was also an art table with a range of art materials. I would sit here with some young men, sometimes talking, sometimes in silence, as we drew or painted onto canvases and t-shirts. During the summer months, we would often walk to the local square. I would sit and watch as some of the boys played cricket, football or badminton and others, not so keen on sports, would sit with me and talk. During the earlier months of the fieldwork, I would take Zoran to the drop-ins run by the various RCOs in the city, who were at that time requesting a responsible adult be present for those under 18. On some occasions, Zoran would sit at a different table to me as he was taking part in ESOL classes, then he would return during the breaks to chat a little bit or run outside for a cigarette. During this time, I was often talking with other volunteers, or joining in a game of scrabble. I would also assist YPHS with their support work, for example, taking Abdullah to the bank so he could open an account once he had acquired leave to remain. On other occasions, I would meet some of the young men in town or on Marlowe Street (see Chapter 5) and we would stop for tea and chat. For all these months I kept fieldwork journals, a mixture of prose or notes, and would write in them every two days or so. Every few months I would turn some of these notes into a reflective piece, to try to gather preliminary thoughts and findings. I would also pull in and make reference to other readings that I encountered during these months, for example, blog posts from ArtReach, who were also working in Calais at the time. The field notes formed a substantial volume of my data, which I drew on for analysis after the fieldwork was completed.

Interviews

In the autumn of 2017, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 7 young men who were either seeking asylum or had been granted leave to remain. The details below in Figure 16 were accurate at the time of the interviews:

Name	Details
Abdul	Former-UASC, now Care-Leaver, with Leave to Remain, aged 18, Sudanese
Bashir	Former-UASC, now Care-Leaver, with Leave to Remain, aged 18, Sudanese
Kofi	Leave to Remain, in temporary accommodation with parents, aged 17, Ethiopian
Farid	Asylum-seeker, in temporary accommodation as was not allowed to remain with his older brother, aged 17, Sudanese
Kasim	Asylum-seeker, in temporary accommodation after family placement broke down, aged 17, Sudanese
Ibrahim	Leave to Remain, lives with father, aged 20, Somali
Abraham	Leave to Remain, in foster care, aged 17, Unaccompanied, Eritrean

Figure 16 Young Participants

I made a digital recording of the conversations with the permission of the young men. In some cases, the young men did not want to be recorded so I made notes instead. The conversations lasted up to an hour and took place in public places such as the library, leisure centre and the local community centre. These were spaces frequented by the young men and by me so were shared spaces. I prepared conversational prompts ahead of the interview. These included:

- First impressions of the city,
- Important people in your life in the city,
- Where you go to spend time,
- Experiences of college/school,
- Aspirations for the future,
- Advice you would give to new arrivals.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with 18 adults, mostly in October 2017. This included support workers at YPHS, youth workers, a foster carer, local politicians, barristers, a social worker, and a community worker. Discussion in these interviews was based on a series of prompts and bullet points I had prepared previously and included:

- What preparation existed, if any, in terms of supporting unaccompanied minors for the first time?
- What prior knowledge of unaccompanied minors did you have?
- Relationship of work with unaccompanied minors in comparison with non-asylum-seeking young people.
- How integration is conceived and enacted?
- The variety of responses to the arrival of unaccompanied minors in the city.

Name/Pseudonym[15]	Description
Lucy	Lucy was a support worker at YPHS. For some months she was supporting Zoran, before he was transferred to Michael's caseload
Wissam	Wissam is also a support worker at YPHS. OF the unaccompanied minors supported by YPHS, Wissam supported Hama.
Jane	Jane was employed by a local children's charity worked with Care Leavers. The focus of her work with unaccompanied minors often in hostel accommodation provided by YPHS
Rosa	Rosa worked voluntarily as a mentor for YPHS. For nearly 12 months she had been mentoring Paulin.
Gulwali	Gulwali is a former UASC from Afghanistan. He is now in his early 20s, a graduate from Manchester University and has written a book 'The Lightless Sky' about his experiences
Michael	Michael was the unaccompanied minor worker for YPHS. At the time, he was supporting 13 unaccompanied minors in Broomshire
Joshua	Joshua was the lead youth-worker for the RYW weekly drop-in. He had also been involved in working with displaced people in Kurdistan
Jo	Jo is a practising barrister at Garden Court Chambers in London specialising in asylum and immigration. She was working on a PhD at the University of Brighton entitled 'The Business of Asylum Justice' investigating the effects of legal aids cuts on access to justice
Kathleen	Kathleen was the manager at YPHS Broomshire office. Her background was in sexual and domestic violence, where she managed women's refuges
Medya	Medya was a former community worker who worked with the Kurdish population in Rothport. At the time of interview, Medya was a researcher at the local university
Anusha	Anusha was a medical researcher and campaigner for Citizens UK. Originally from Syria, she had been central in the local campaign to resettle Syrian refugees in the city
Mary	Mary was a former social worker who worked with unaccompanied minors. She had also worked for the Red Cross. At the time of interview, she was employed at the university as a research associate
Anna	Anna was a local councillor with many years' experience working at a municipal level in adoption and fostering. She sat on various boards on the local council to do with young people and had been a key organiser for the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in the city
Helen	Helen was an art therapist working for ArtReach, a charity which provided art therapy for refugee and asylum seekers. She led the pilot project of art therapy with RYW
Rushna	Rushna was a youth worker who had been involved with the drop-in at RYW from its inception. She was also the lead on a forum for young BME people, including refugees and asylum seekers, in the city council
James Costa, MP	The local MP's office had been particularly active in supporting detained asylum seekers and migrants
Naomi	Naomi was a foster carer for a 17- year old Iranian young man. She and her family had frequently hosted refugees and asylum seekers

Figure 17 Adult Participants

Figure 17 above details the interviews with adults that took place. In most cases, these interviews were one-to-one. Lucy and Wissam were interviewed together. Abraham was interviewed alone without being recorded. He then said he wanted to be interviewed again to do a better job and chose to be interviewed with Ibrahim.

[15] I have used pseudonyms where the identity of the participant would identify the young people.

Photography

For many of the young men, college played a major role in structuring their week and the major social forum. During the long summer vacation, Michael at YPHS was concerned that the young men he was supporting would become bored and possibly drawn towards activities that may be deemed anti-social. As a response, Michael and I devised a series of photography workshops held in collaboration with RYW. Joshua at RYW facilitated the photography tuition and RYW provided the space and digital SLR cameras. As part of the project, I provided disposable analogue cameras for the young men to take home and use to chronicle their daily lives in and around the city. I intended to then use these photos as prompts to stimulate semi-structured interviews with the young men and obtained their permission to do so as part of the ethical approvals for the project.

The project had mixed success. Attendance was patchy and a range of other activities offered by alternative providers were preferred by the young men. For example, one local charity offered a course in 'Confidence and Effective Communication', which some of the young men judged to be very important in terms of their career development. Nevertheless, a large volume of photos was produced. We selected some of these photos and displayed them at RYW. I held some conversations with the young men in response to these photos and I referred to them myself when forming prompts for semi-structured interviews.

Evolution of Methods

There was considerable evolution of methods of research over the fieldwork months. In this section, I explain the choice of methods employed with reference to the research questions but also with regard to the preferences and needs of the young men themselves. The realities I encountered once fieldwork had commenced required a fluid and flexible approach on my part, as well as considerable time to establish and sustain trust and confidences.

Rethinking Participation

Prior to commencing fieldwork in January 2017, I proposed a programme rooted within a participatory framework, with methods 'geared towards planning and conducting the research process *with* those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study' (Bergold and Thomas, 2012, p.1, italics in original). In addition to conducting focus groups with adult practitioners in two locations, I intended to conduct task-based and stimulus-based activities with the young men including digital diaries and photography alongside a series of Forum Theatre workshops.

Whilst I had initially intended on using forum theatre as a method with which to engage with the young men, I rejected this plan once the fieldwork had begun, as I judged it inappropriate. I did not meet a unified group of young men during fieldwork; the young men

were from a range of countries, rural and urban contexts, with different families, experiences of formal education, of employment, of political involvement, of state violence and many more contrasting circumstances. It felt wrong and misguided to adopt methods that assumed a group coherence that was not there. Additionally, my meetings and conversations with these young men were often irregular and erratic. Their lives were interspersed with appointments with social workers, solicitors, the Home Office and various medical professionals. Some young men were dealing with immediate threats of immigration removal or homelessness. I realised that if I were to be allowed access to the lives, thoughts and experiences of these young men at the same time as respecting their agency, it would be on their terms not mine. The participation agenda was my own and, as such, to continue with it in its original form would have been not only didactic but, I believe, unsuccessful. The young men I encountered voted with their feet.

Establishing Rapport and Trust: Participant Observation and the Ethnographic toolbox

When I first met Joshua, one of the youth workers at RYW, he took me on a tour of the building and chatted to me about the youth work with unaccompanied minors. He told me, 'lots of people have come in wanting to do interviews with the young people, to get 'young people's voice' and then leave. Everyone wants a piece of the pie'. I nodded and listened. 'Just show your face for a while', he told me.

In recent years, the relative rise in numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has led to an increase in the volume of research conducting with and on groups and individuals in situations of forced migration (Pittaway et al., 2010). The positions of vulnerability and marginalization associated with forced migration can result in exploitation, despite well-intentioned research practices(ibid.). For example, research may raise the expectations of the participants, who may not necessarily distinguish between the authority of the researcher and that of other authorities responsible for asylum decisions. There is also a risk of re-traumatization if a participant is asked to recount particularly sensitive events from their past (ibid.). Indeed, it is sometimes this concern for capturing 'the story', often during a brief and fleeting fieldwork period, that can be particularly harmful to participants. Pittway *et al* (ibid.) cite a women's group in Thailand who state that researchers had:

> *… asked us to lead them to women who had been raped so they could record their stories. 'Tell us what happened- how did you feel?' Women were so upset after the interviews, we did not know what to do. We never heard from them (the researchers) again- we decided then that we would never work with researchers again. They stole our stories. We can gather the stories ourselves from our own people…*
>
> (Women's Group, Thailand, in Pittaway et al., 2010, p.236)

In such contexts, 'do no harm' is a minimal requirement; instead, as Pittaway et al. (ibid., p.231) argue:

> *… the ethical challenge is for researchers to add value to the lives of the people they are researching, recognising them as subjects in the process and not simply as sources of data.*

With this in mind, I adopted an ethnographic[16] approach, considering that this would provide time and opportunity for developing relationships with the young men and thus holistic and meaningful opportunities to get to know them as people, not just as data sources. The flexibility of the ethnographic approach was also useful as my research questions focussed on the daily practices of integration of young people seeking asylum and the understandings of this process from the point of view of the adults in their lives. I was also interested in the ways in which the young men's agency might be 'thinned' or 'thickened' in different contexts and different periods of time. Therefore, it was essential to develop an approach that allowed for data collection over a period of time and in different situations. By engaging in participant observation, I was able to observe and converse with the young men in a variety of settings- with their peers at college, at youth group, around other refugees and asylum seekers in Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) and in relation with their support workers and foster carers, as examples.

An ethnographic approach was also appropriate for my fieldwork due to the necessity of establishing trust and rapport with the young men, which required substantial time and engagement. Ethnography has been used successfully with young people, for example, Eyber and Ager's (2004) work with young people in Angola. Here ethnography was used alongside PRA and workshops on PTSD. The main aim of this research was to give voice to the young people themselves as 'primary informants on their own lives' (ibid., p.290). They write:

> *Rather than viewing young people as passive victims, the assumption guiding this research was that they are active agents who contribute to, transform and influence the situation and environments in which they find themselves.*
>
> (ibid., p.190)

[16] I understood an ethnographic approach to be one which has a substantial number of the following:

- 'a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them.'
- 'a tendency to work primarily with 'unstructured data', that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories.'
- 'investigation of a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail.'
- 'analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most.' (Aktinson and Hammersley, 1998, p.248)

Throughout the fieldwork, the young men allowed me to spend time with them and eventually instigated contact themselves because I had become a regular presence in their lives and because a degree of trust had been established. From January 2017, I regularly attended weekly youth nights at RYW, sitting and talking with the young men, taking part in activities such as art, fencing, cooking and games and teaching simple tunes on the piano. As time progressed, it emerged that in some cases, we had friends and acquaintances in common through their association with other agencies and support networks in the city and a type of friendship emerged between us. Some young men knew that I was useful: that I would write letters of support to solicitors, help them with writing CVs. I would regularly meet with some of the young men to help them with their college work in English and Maths. Because I was involved with refugee, asylum-seeker and youth networks in the city, I was a convenient point of contact. For example, when a young Ethiopian man wanted to join a football team, I was able to phone a Cameroonian friend who was recruiting for a local team. Whilst I emphasise that a degree of trust was established between the young men and me, the young men kept aspects of their lives private; at times, a young man might respond to a question of mine telling me they did not want to talk about it. Also, I would sometimes find out information regarding the young men during the YPHS staff meetings: information that the young men themselves had not told me themselves. In some cases, I sensed the young men were ashamed and did not want me to be aware of certain aspects of their lives. I listened to their stories as they chose to tell them to me on the understanding that the truths we tell about ourselves are always partial. In addition to this, I did not want to be seen as yet another adult asking for details of the young man's life. This is illustrated well with a conversation I had with a young man from Afghanistan, Shehzad. He said to me:

> *Everyone wants to know my story. Doctor asked for my story. I said ask foster family. It's hard for me.* (Journal notes, 4/17)

I was made to realise the 'story of the story', which was viewed as unwanted and resented by some of the young men. A young man's 'story' referred to, from my observations, their reasons for flight and their journey to the UK. It was therefore a partial account of their life and, in the cases I knew, a private and highly sensitive matter. Adults in authority would ask the young men for this 'story' rather readily and it seemed to me that, irrespective of the young person's own story of self, it was this 'story' that served to define the young man. Similarly, the prevalence of offers of psychotherapeutic support for young men was not always positively received and was at times viewed with hostility and even anger. One young man, Abraham, when waiting for a decision from the courts regarding his asylum appeal said to me:

> *Why would I talk about my problems? When I've finished talking, I will still have my problems. I have better things to do!*

(Journal notes, 7/17)

I did not want to be part of this. I wanted to hear what the young men chose to tell me on their own terms and to steer clear of any research method that might be seen as probing for 'the story' once more.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Towards the end of the fieldwork period, I conducted a series of interviews with the young men and with adults in the local area who had involvement with unaccompanied minors in some form. By this time, I had established good and trusting relationships with the young men who participated in interview. They had also acquired a good level of English, which enabled the interviews to take place without an interpreter present. By October of 2017, I had a clearer understanding of emerging themes and points of discussion, based on several months' worth of fieldnotes and conversations with a range of actors. I felt ready at this point to make use of the dedicated length of time provided by a formal interview setting, with both adults and children. This echoes with the method of ethnographic interviewing, described by Sherman (2007) as a research method where:

> … *researchers have established respectful, on-going relationships with their interviewees, including enough rapport for there to be a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness in the interviews for the interviewees to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their worlds.* (p.369)

Such an approach also dovetails well with the epistemological and ontological foundations of this thesis, from which a conception of co-construction of knowledge emerges. Opting for interviews with young men at this time acknowledged the complexity of social interaction at play during the interview (ibid.), made more meaningful through the establishment of rapport and trust over time. My approach here was informed by the metaphor of 'the traveller' employed in Kvale's (1996) work. Kvale (ibid.) adopts two contrasting metaphors: that of 'the miner' versus that of 'the traveller'. The interviewer, in the miner metaphor, approaches the interview as a means by which to gather new information and to gather data as an extraction (ibid.). Conversely, in the traveller metaphor, the interviewer is on a journey, fluid in direction, where interactions with others produce new understandings; both the interviewer and the interviewee are in some way changed by the process (ibid.).

The 'traveller' metaphor was especially apt in regard to my interviews with the young men but also with some adults with whom I had spent much time during the fieldwork months and, with whom, I had shared experiences of supporting and spending time with unaccompanied minors; this was a time of steep learning for us. However, in some cases, I conducted interviews with adults, such as the local councillor or local MP, with whom I did

not have an established relationship. In these cases, the nature of the interview was more formal with a greater degree of structure. Whereas, with the young men, I had generic bullet points of emerging themes around which I could steer the conversation, I came to the more formal interviews with more tightly-scripted questions, which were in some cases made available to the interviewee ahead of time. This flexibility in approach was beneficial to the fieldwork, as I was able to explore meanings and understandings more freely in the less formal interviews, in a way that gave space to the young men to direct the conversation.

Analysis of Data

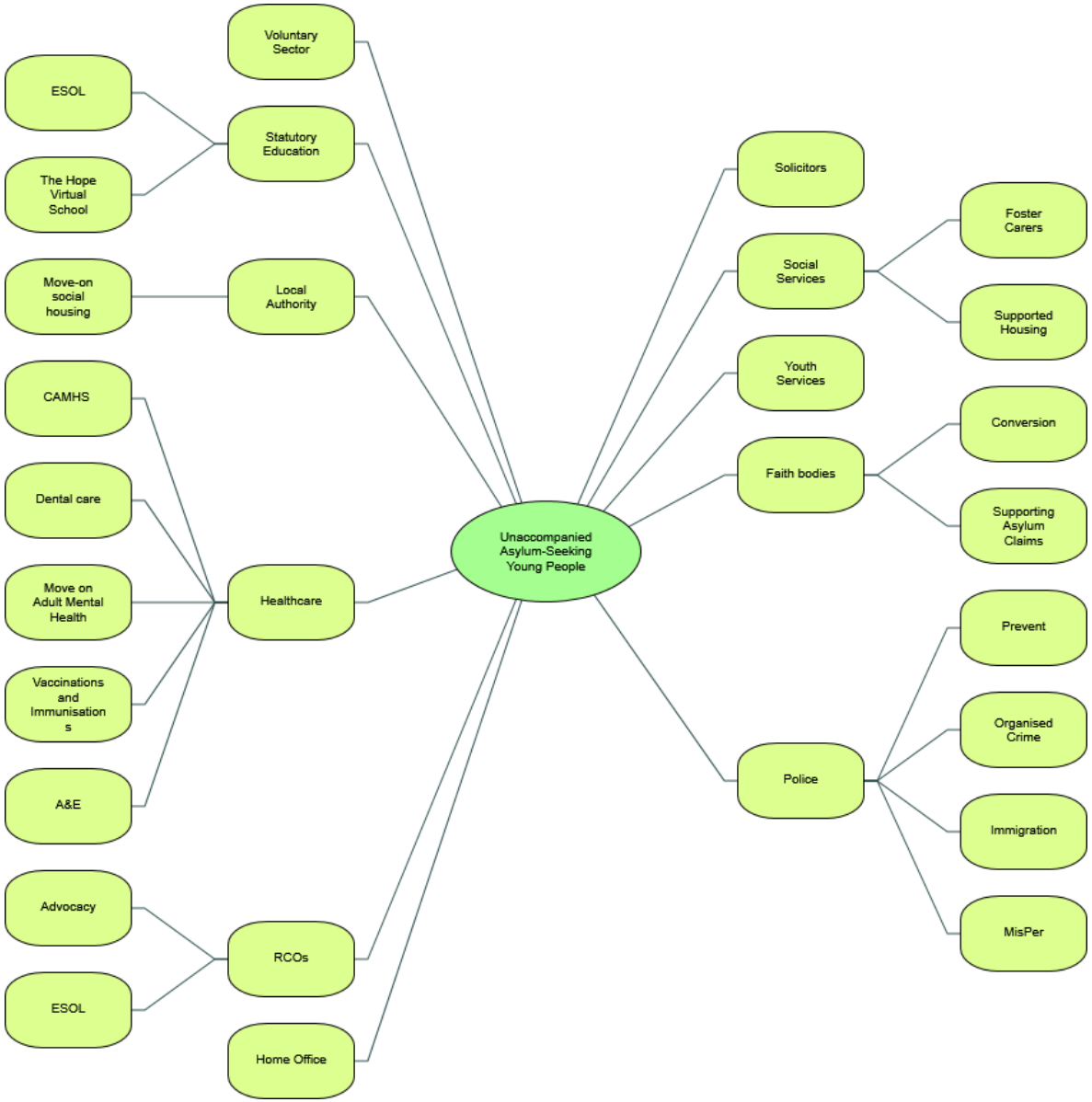
I ended the fieldwork period with a large, seemingly unwieldy, collection of notebooks and journals from the ethnographic observation. These included snippets of conversations, my observations at the time, details of people I had met and my own reflections on specific moments. For the most part I had written in note form but at times in lengthier prose. Sometimes I had stuck relevant photos into my journals and annotated around them. I also made audio notes into my Dictaphone when I was on the move and wanted to make a note of something pertinent. All hard material was scanned into electronic form and incorporated into an NVivo file I used for storing, organising and analysing the data. I transcribed the audio files from the interviews and these were also incorporated into NVivo along with the photos from the photography project and from the Facebook page of the RYW drop-in. I also included hundreds of emails between myself and other participants over the course of the fieldwork as well as training materials I had received from, for example, the mentoring programme run by YPHS and Coram Children's Legal Centre.

My data were organised into different folders of 'sources'. These are documents I have created and collected outside of NVivo including audio transcripts, scanned journals and the like outlined above. I organised these according to their provenance. For example, notes and material from the art therapy observations formed one folder and materials relating to YPHS formed another. I also had a folder of sources entitled 'emails' although this required several subdivisions.

I created 'nodes' within NVivo to act as themes for the coding of the data. Here, theme is understood as 'a statement of meaning that (1) runs through all or most of the pertinent data, or (2) one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual impact' (Ely, 1991, p.150). Themes I identified included 'aspirations', 'asylum process', 'pre-conceptions', 'self-care' and 'labour force and funding'. These themes/nodes were at times sub-divided; I divided the node 'integration/belonging' into 'the good path' and 'the wrong path'. Some of these themes had occurred to me during the fieldwork and with ongoing discussions with participants, colleagues and my supervisory team. Others became evident or refined as I read through and re-read the data imported as sources. I was then able to annotate the

data using these nodes. NVivo then allows these annotations to be pulled together under one thematic heading. I also made use of the mapping facility within NVivo to illustrate and explore relationships within the data. For example, I used a ‘mindmapping’ exercise within the programme entitled ‘Mapping the City’ to explore the various institutions and structures mediating the resettlement processes of the young men and employed this to structure my presentation and analysis of data in subsequent chapters. I have inserted an earlier draft of this mapping exercise below in Figure 18:

Figure 18 Mapping of Data in NVivo



I was then able to select nodes that occurred the most frequently in the data and to filter the data accordingly. The primary nodes were then employed to devise and structure the empirical chapters. I recognised the structures that were particularly salient in the data were those relating to formal education, accommodation of varying forms, children's services, and the asylum system. However, data analysis revealed the asylum system to differ from the other structures, in that it was exclusively experienced as a site of control, whereas the other domains featured relationships built on care that grew and shifted over time. Consequently, I decided to write a separate chapter about the asylum system. In addition to this, data analysis, and reflections during fieldwork, had revealed a relevant space in and around the area known as Marlowe Street, which was important in the experiences of the young men and in the multiple understandings of integration practices. This formed the first empirical chapter, thereby introducing the reader to dominant themes of the thesis, the location of much of the fieldwork, as well as some of the young men who participated in the research. The empirical chapters bring in discussion and analysis of findings in relation to the research questions around agency and integration, which I explore more fully in Chapter 8.

Thinking Reflexively about Power and Positionality

I have sought to demonstrate here a meaningful engagement with ethical requirements above and beyond the practical and administrative requirements from the university and other stakeholders and gatekeepers. In adopting ethnographic methods, I considered the fit of orthodox ethnography to the context in which I was researching and the research questions underpinning my thesis. Karen Armstrong (2008) describes ethnography thus:

> *Anthropologically informed ethnography is based on long-term fieldwork, and participant observation in a society other than one's own* (p.55)

My own approach resonated with the long-term nature of the fieldwork and the prominence of participant observation as research methods. However, my fieldwork took place in the city where I was living, in the country of my birth and citizenship and where I have lived most of my life. Therefore, rather than observing 'a society other than one's own' (ibid., p.55), I was employing ethnography as 'a contextual method that seeks holistic understandings of persons in social settings' (Caulkins, 2014, p.310). I framed myself as a participant and was embedded in the field; I was living in community with people seeking asylum and had chosen to live in solidarity with asylum-seekers and refugees, many of whom had become my friends. At the same time, there were substantial differences in circumstance between my position and that of many of my participants. The unaccompanied minors I knew were young males of colour who had spent their lives until now in the majority

world. My ‘society’, away from this fieldwork period, was one of a comfortable Leftist-politics, feminism, academic and professional colleagues and friends and the security and privilege that comes from being white, middle-class, formally educated to a high degree and possessing British citizenship.

This distinction between my own experiences and those of my participants called to mind Dwyer and Buckle’s (2009) analysis on ‘The Space Between’ in terms of being an ‘Insider’ or ‘Outsider’ in qualitative research. They describe an ‘insider’ as ‘sharing the characteristic, role, or experience under study with the participants’ as opposed to ‘an outsider to the commonality shared by participants’ (ibid., p.55). What is useful in Dwyer and Buckle’s discussion is the reflection that within difference, there are sometimes ‘shared experiences, opinions, and perspectives’ (ibid., p.26). They propose the concept of ‘the space between’ in order to disrupt the binary of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ status. They suggest a dialectical approach that allows for the negotiation of similarities and differences (ibid.). I use this invitation to negotiation below in considering my positionality in this research. Positionality is understood here as ‘the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study’ (Rowe, 2014, p.627).

I was very much an outsider to the asylum-seeker experience. My life so far had been remarkably sedentary with the exception of travels in the majority world that were effectively extended holidays with brief interludes of teaching. My mother was a teacher and although my father experienced long-term unemployment, the welfare state gave us income support and paid for our school dinners. My schooling was uninterrupted, my siblings and I had music lessons and caravan holidays and we hid our poverty under a middle-class veneer of classical music, literature and wholegrains. We did not know poverty or violence on a level experienced by so many who are forced to flee their countries of origin. Our small town in the home counties was mostly white British, although my Catholic primary school had a large Irish demographic. This, along with my mother’s Jewish heritage, occasionally gave rise to a realisation of difference that was, for the most part, benign. Aged 18, I took a plane for the first time and spent 6 months in Brazil. I returned to the UK for my undergraduate studies and became involved in volunteering with refugee organisations. In my mid-20s, I began working as a teacher in Whitechapel, East London, in a predominantly Bangladeshi community. This was my first experience living and working in a diverse community in the UK. Some years later, by which time I had moved from London, I got involved in activism and campaigning for asylum seeker and refugee rights in the city of my fieldwork. Being amidst a multicultural neighbourhood had, notwithstanding two years in rural Gloucestershire, become normal for me.

I was painfully conscious that I was approaching this research from a position of relative power and safety, particularly in regards to collaborating with unaccompanied minors. Perhaps naively, I had conceived of this research as a process of mutual empowerment. In reality, I could not offer any real material buffer against the brutalities of the immigration system. Unlike many of my participants, I knew the whereabouts of my family and loved ones, I knew they were safe and that I could be with them within a short train journey. What I brought with me to the research, however, was a recent experience of seeking safety following my decision to leave an abusive marriage. I invoke here an understanding of reflexivity as forcing:

> *…us to come to terms not only with our choice of research problem and with those with whom we engage in the research process, but with ourselves and with the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research setting.* (Lincoln et al., 2018, p.143)

Following Reinharz (1997), I conceive of myself as a researcher at this time as multiple, broadly fitting into three categories:

> *… research-based selves, brought selves (the selves that historically, socially, and personally create our standpoints), and situationally created selves.* (p.5)

My 'brought-self' was someone with a predilection for 'playing the rescuer' coupled with a 'situationally created self' dealing with the fall-out of my own personal life. The fieldwork offered a timely opportunity to occupy my waking hours with other people's problems and to channel my anger and loss into helping young men whose life stories made my own situation somehow more manageable. Over the course of the fieldwork months, I developed an anger at the injustices of the asylum system and my heightened awareness of the harshness and violence of much of the world. I was frequently angry with the institutions of state responsible for responding to the needs of the young men seeking asylum. I was angry that these young men were being told by the Home Office that they were liars and I was angry that many were made to wait and wait for any communication from the Home Office that may have allowed them to move on with their lives.

I grew concerned, at times, with my desire to protect and defend and the relationship of my approach to a narrative that depicts refugees and racialized 'others' more generally as victims. I drew here upon the work of Pupavac (2008), who explores the representation of refugees in the UK. What is problematic, according to Pupavac (ibid.), is that a focus on refugees as 'troubled victims' is pathologizing: refugees are represented as in some way 'sick', which is often followed with impaired reason. Their interests, therefore, 'risk being determined for them' (p.272). Similarly, I refer to Malkki's (1996) work, which explores more

broadly the representation of refugees as objects of concern and study. Malkki (ibid.,) writes;

> *One of the most far-reaching, important consequences of these established representational practices is the systemic, even if unintended, silencing of persons who find themselves in the classificatory space of 'refugee'.* (p.386)

Through my reflexive practice, I was thus cognizant in my own writing of the risk of pathologizing the young men I met as victims. That is not to deny instances of maltreatment or positions of vulnerability, nor the differences in power and status between the participants and me. Rather, it became apparent not to confuse my own drive to 'rescue', which is in itself an assertion of power, with the needs of my participants. This 'dependent protective relationship', writes Pupavac (2008), 'is linked to broader victim advocacy in Western societies transforming rights into protective governance' (p.281). For the research process to be emancipatory in any way, I needed to be sure not to construct the young men as victims but rather as active and meaningful participants in their own lives.

The meeting of multiple selves (Reinharz, 1997) was a challenge in other ways, particularly concerning the clarity of the roles I had in the lives of the young men. In order to gain access to my participants, I was a volunteer with two local youth organisations. However, I was also living in shared accommodation with adult asylum seekers and was embedded in the larger asylum seeker community in Rothport. Over the summer of 2017, children's services in Rothport and Broomshire both became concerned with the young men frequenting an area of the city around Marlowe Street, which features in chapter 5. The concern was based particularly around Kurdish establishments in this area and I was informed by children's services not to arrange to meet the young men in these locations and to generally dissuade them from going to Marlowe Street. Furthermore, I was also advised by one social worker to not associate with the Kurdish community in Rothport. I found this problematic, not just because I was sharing a household with adult Kurdish men at the time and had friends in this community, but because it was a locale that the young Kurdish men I knew had claimed as an important space of belonging for them. I felt conflicted as a researcher, committed to respecting the choices of the young men, and as a volunteer, where I was formally obligated to follow safeguarding advice. The end result was something of a compromise: I would meet Zoran, for instance, in a café on Marlowe Street run by a couple I was friends with and I turned a blind eye to Zoran's continued presence in the Kurdish establishments.

I was also conflicted as a friend and mentor to the young men. At times the young men would confide in me and I would be privy to private aspects of their lives. Similarly, I shared some aspects of my life with them. Over time, a friendship of sorts developed. As an example, towards the end of the fieldwork I had become unwell with anxiety and other personal troubles and had left Rothport for a couple of weeks to stay with my brother. When

I returned, Abraham was very angry with me for not confiding in him. Whilst I tried to keep my explanations vague, saying I had been stressed, Abraham was persistent in the need for details. I gave some explanation for my sadness at the time, which seemed to make Abraham even angrier: 'What do you have to be sad about? You have everything. Your family is here. I am alone here. I have no one!', he shouted at me. There was not a clear resolution to this conflict, nor to my own uncertainty of the role I was supposed to play in such relationships. Rather, it was a shifting space of negotiation, which added to the richness and complexity of the data.

In the text below, I develop further this space of reflection in considering the role of gender in my research.

Thinking about Gender

My research participants who were seeking asylum, were all male. It had not been my intention to engage solely with unaccompanied young men. Instead, it resulted from the demographic of unaccompanied minors in Rothport at that time which, in itself, reflects more broadly the nature of asylum-seeking by unaccompanied minors arriving in the UK. This has been a majority-male phenomenon (see Chapter 2, Figure 2). In this section, I first briefly discuss the concept of gender as it informs power relations across society and relate this to the subjectivist ontology underpinning my research. I then offer some key reflections on the implications and manifestations of this gender order specific to my fieldwork and analysis of data.

Warren and Hackney (2000) assert that:

> *Gender is built into the social structure of Western and non-Western social orders, across time and space, permeating other hierarchies of race or status* (p.1).

This 'gender order', referring to 'the ways in which societies shape notions of masculinity and femininity into power relationships' (Macionis and Plummer, 2012, p.390), may manifest itself in phenomena such as the gendered division of labour (see, e.g. Leacock and Safa, 1986; Mies, 1986; Mohanty, 2003), Intimate Partner Violence (Bates, 2016; Bates and Weare, 2020), and representations of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and James, 2005). More pertinently, it is an order that informs recent migratory movements towards Europe, which is an overwhelmingly male phenomenon (Allsopp, 2017).

Earlier in this chapter, I drew attention to the contingency of what constitutes (social) scientific knowledge on social relations of power (O'Connell Davidson and Layder, 1994). Whilst, within the positivist paradigm, scientific knowledge is constructed as value-free (ibid.), my research is informed by a subjective ontology. This ontological stance presupposes that knowledge of the social world is embedded in subjective value-positions informed by relations of power embedded in particular social and historical contexts (Lincoln

et al., 2018) These power relations are necessarily gendered. My research findings are derived from multiple representations of social reality informed by gendered power relations. The gender order permeates participants' experiences and relationships as well as my standpoint, my understandings and observations and my relationships.

I was able to gain access to my young participants through my volunteer roles with local charities working in this area. As a consequence, interactions with the young men were to a great extent determined by relevant institutional protocols. I did not hug the young men, for instance and we would greet each other with a nod or perhaps a handshake. Rothport Youth Works staff created work profiles on Facebook to communicate with the young people, rather than using their personal profiles, and I did the same. YPHS also provided me with a separate mobile phone to use with the young men they were supporting, rather than my personal mobile. Yet this was an approach I adopted when interacting with young women as well, who also frequenting Rothport Youth Works. It was standard practice for respecting personal space, as I had maintained as a teacher in the years previously.

Outside of my fieldwork, I had interactions with adults seeking asylum; these relationships were more clearly manifested as gendered. For instance, I became friends with female asylum seekers nearer my own age; we would send messages on WhatsApp, share problems and more details from our personal lives and greet each other with hugs. Whilst I lived with male adult asylum seekers, in some ways these relations were more boundaried, mainly in terms of a lack of physical touch and less personal topics of conversation.

The young men in my fieldwork were a good twenty years younger than me. In many cases, I was older than their mothers. Over time, I adopted different roles with each of them. For example, I became particularly close to Abraham and Ibrahim and we maintained the most frequent contact after the fieldwork. In this role, I was something of an auntie figure; I took Abraham for driving lessons once he turned 17 and Ibrahim would sit in the back of the car. After we would go for local Eritrean food and I would 'check in' with both of them, asking about college and their moves into independent accommodation. My relationship with Zoran was different; I tried to maintain myself as something of an ally to him, respecting his need for secrecy but keeping 'one foot in the door' on Marlowe Street so he would know I was there if I needed him.

In short, the relations between myself and the young men were informed by gender alongside other categories, including age and the specifics of the young men's lives at different times. Factors such as religion, class and level of education also played a role.

A Case Study Approach

There is considerable variability within the social sciences regarding what constitutes a case study (Schwandt and Gates, 2018). Schwandt and Gates (ibid.) write:

> *In the simplest sense, a case is an instance, incident, or unit of something and can be anything- a person, an organization, an event, a decision, an action, a location like a neighbourhood, or a nation-state.* (p.341)

Proponents of the hypothetico-deductive model of social science may characterise the case study as somewhat limited as an approach (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Whilst the case study may be considered useful in the preliminary stages of research in order to generate hypotheses, it is of little use thereafter as it cannot be used to generalise findings from the particular to the broader class (ibid.). Flyvbjerg (ibid) identifies five 'misunderstandings' of the case study approach:

1) the findings from a case study are context-dependent, which is less valuable than theoretical, context-independent knowledge,
2) as one cannot generalize from a particular case, the case study is of limited use to scientific development,
3) case studies are only useful in preliminary stages of research for the purpose of hypothesis development,
4) case studies are too subjective,
5) it is difficult to develop general propositions from specific case studies.

A full examination of Flyvbjerg's (ibid.) dismantling of these misunderstandings is beyond the scope here but the first two are particularly relevant for this thesis. Firstly, as Flyvbjerg (ibid.) argues, '… in the study of human affairs, there appears to exist only context-dependent knowledge' (p.221). This ties with the interpretive orientation of my thesis, which I have outlined above. This orientation eschews context-independent, rule-based knowledge, advocating instead an understanding of knowledge as 'historically situated and entangled in power relationships' (Wedeen, 2010, p.260).

In terms of the generalisability from the case study, Flyvbjerg's (2006) counter-argument centres partly on the flawed overvaluing of generalization as a tenet of hypothetico-deductive social science. Instead, he suggests (ibid.), 'the force of example' should be exalted, as it permits, with just one case, the falsification of general theory (p.228). I understand the benefits of the case study approach for my thesis somewhat differently. Firstly, I refer to this case study as 'descriptive' or 'holistic' (Yin, 2014). It is a research approach that is 'used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context' (Crowe et al., 2011, p.1). With this in mind, it was not my intention to establish typicality (Schwandt and Gates, 2018).

The findings from this case study do offer wider insights and understandings. In using this method, I have been able to engage with young men who are rarely given a voice in academic research and are often rendered vulnerable and marginalized by policy and practice particularly pertaining to asylum and immigration. This necessitated a prolonged, continuous engagement with a small number of young men in multiple but contiguous settings. Furthermore, my case study is one of many that engage with related themes and actors including, for example, Yeo (2020), Wilding (2017b), Allsopp (2019). Learning, Flyvbjerg (2006) states, relies on multiple, context-based, practical case studies more than it does on context-independent, theoretical extrapolation:

> *Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity. Such knowledge and expertise also lie at the center of the case study as a research and teaching method or to put it more generally still, as a method of learning* (ibid., p.222).

Multiple related case studies offer opportunities for comparison and recognition of trends and patterns as well as permitting the level of nuance and subjectivity necessary when engaging with actors in positions of vulnerability.

Finally, my case study builds on and contributes to emerging developments in the sociology of childhood, conceptualisations of childhood agency and the relationship between agency and vulnerability. It does not lie isolated from existing theoretical work but rather is connected and informed by existing practice. In dialogue with other practitioners, it forms one original yet related part of a broader body of work.

ETHICS

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was received from the Department of Social and Policy Sciences at the University of Bath in November 2016. The request for approval had detailed the following;

- A justification for the research;
- Avoidance of deception, presentation of purpose of study;
- Arrangements for debriefing, including access to support;
- Obtaining consent, including right to withdraw;
- Avoidance of distress or threats to self-esteem;
- Privacy and confidentiality;
- Special circumstances (e.g. respondents who cannot give consent, children under 16, unusual issues around privacy);
- Additional general ethical issues;

Along with departmental guidelines, I also referred to the ethical standards provided by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth. These expand upon the sensitive ethical areas mentioned above, with attention to issues of trust and reciprocity between the researcher and research participants as well as the need for a recognition of power differentials (ASA, 2011). There are particular ethical issues with this research project that relate to the age of the participants, their immigration status, levels of English language competency, obtaining informed consent and threats to psychological distress. I expand upon these areas below.

Beneficence and non-maleficence

The field of migration studies is inherently political (Doná, 2007). According to Dona (Doná, 2007, p.210), 'forced migration researchers implicitly or explicitly embrace the ideal that the knowledge they generate will ultimately help the uprooted and displaced: research into the suffering of others can only be justified if alleviation of that suffering is an explicit objective'.

Research with children who may be in positions of vulnerability also demands particular attention to ethical issues. Montgomery (2007, p.426) asks, ‘whether there is a moral requirement of anthropologists who research children to do something with their research other than make an academic career out of it. In what ways should research findings be used in order to alleviate the difficult situations that children face?’. Social scientists may otherwise be open to charges of ‘academic voyeurism’, which, ‘is no substitute for more action on behalf of the victims’ (La Fontaine, 1990, p.17). As a minimum, an evaluation of the risks and benefits of including children in research should precede all research and should remain at the forefront of concerns during and after the fieldwork (O'Kane et al.,

2016) In addition, the research project should be non-extractive, in that it 'does not merely seek to take from communities (in terms of their time, efforts and information) but rather also seeks to give back in some measure' (O'Kane et al., 2016, p.18).

In my fieldwork, I sought to address this concern in various ways. Formally, as a volunteer with YPHS, I tried to organise activities that would be fun for some of the young men. For example, I took Zoran and Serhat to a mobile theme park that was visiting Rothport early in the summer of 2017 and we also took a day trip to London that Easter. I also arranged to meet with some of the young men who, learning that I had been a schoolteacher prior to starting the PhD programme, had asked for help with their college work, normally Maths and English. I was also on occasion able to offer support for young men who required written testimonies for their asylum cases. Alongside this, I aimed to build relationships with the young men where I was available to listen to them if they so wished, to take an interest in their lives beyond their 'asylum story' and to be open to learning from them . Abraham and I would meet weekly and spend some time where I would help him with his English homework. Often, we would then go to a local Eritrean restaurant, as I had told Abraham how much I enjoyed this food when I had been in Uganda. It was important to Abraham that he paid for our meal; I had helped him, he said, and he was able to do this in return. I felt that this, as well as an opportunity to have delicious food, was an important part in establishing a more reciprocal relationship, where he was in a position to help and to serve, not just to be a recipient of someone else's need to be needed.

Confidentiality, Anonymity and Child Protection

At the time of the fieldwork, the numbers of young men seeking asylum unaccompanied in Rothport was relatively small. As such, I chose to anonymise all participants, places and organisations. Whilst most of the young men were happy to be identified, by naming them I risked revealing the identities of those who wished to remain anonymous. Details and participants can sometimes be recognised by related service providers even when the general public are left unaware. This is significant, particularly when participants may be putting themselves at risk in speaking to me. Where necessary, I have created fictional elements informed by my experiences with these young men.

The protection of privacy also involves attention to security including cyber security. In this, I abided by university regulations regarding the storing of data. I frequently worked from home and my home address at the time was affiliated with a hospitality network for asylum seekers and thus a house of multiple occupancy and a social hub for a range of people. I ensured that personal information, notes and data relating to the project and its participants were not accessible and were kept private and securely locked.

Informed Consent

In many humanitarian settings, the access of research participants to formal complaints mechanisms or procedures to redress grievances may be lacking. The fieldwork for this project took place in the UK, where it easier than in many situations of war and protracted violence to ensure that proper mechanisms are in place and that participants have access to complaints procedures. Through close collaboration with other adults, particularly at RYW and YPHS, I ensured that the young men would have access to feedback mechanisms, for example, through liaising with other adults employed to work with the young men.

In the UK, consent from children is taken to mean consent from their parents. In the case of this thesis, I sought and attained consent from children's services from both Rothport and Broomshire local authorities. Whilst this was an important formality for the research project, I sought the consent of the young men in addition to those acting on their behalf. The consent from a 'responsible adult' is not necessarily meaningful if the young man in question does not have a trusting relationship with this adult. Whilst the adult is in a position of authority, the young man may not feel they can realistically decline to take part once the adult has issued consent on their part. Furthermore, the young men concerned had lived experiences that rendered them more than competent to consent, or not, for themselves.

Consent is not a question of all-or-nothing (Sin, 2005). Participants needed to know that they can refuse to answer a particular question, or withdraw from the fieldwork at any time, without giving a reason (Hopkins, 2008). This was not just a matter of providing verbal reassurance but also being attentive to body language, employing a sense of empathy and showing a social awareness during the research. I was aware that the young men might arrive with a range of assumptions and experiences around adult power and control (Hopkins, 2008). Therefore, I may have been perceived as having some form of authority and thus needed to establish a relationship of trust whilst making it clear I bore no relation to any formalities regarding their immigration status.

From the commencement of my fieldwork, I spoke regularly to participants about my research and talked about writing a book for the university about the experiences of young men like themselves. When conducting the interviews and the photography project, I prepared and distributed information sheets. These were differentiated for the young men, simplifying the language where necessary, and included contact information for further support should they desire it. I asked adult participants to sign a consent form, but I did not do so for the young men; I had witnessed too many times these young men being presented with forms requiring their signature and their obedient signing without understanding what they were being asked to agree to. One young man, for example, had signed up for a rowing activity. When I explained what the activity was, he was horrified; he could not swim and his experiences of crossing the Mediterranean on the journey had left him understandably

fearful. In the information sheet for the young men and in the conversations I had with them, I made it clear that although I would protect their right to privacy, if I were to become aware of instances of abuse or harm to themselves or others, I would have to report it to the appropriate adult. This was a condition of me gaining approval from the relevant local authorities.

Local Authority Approval

The young men with whom I was conducting research were under the care of two neighbouring local authorities and I required ethical approval from both. Both local authorities had protocols in place, which I was able to access online. In some instances, the summer vacation meant relevant personnel were on annual leave and in other instances staff turnover complicated the process. Nevertheless, the process proved beneficial in reassuring the local authorities of the suitability of the research project and that the necessary safeguards for the young men were in place. I was also able to provide assurances regarding the encryption of data. The project was approved by both local authorities and re-approved by the University in June 2017.

SUMMARY

Prior to commencing fieldwork, my examiner at the point of confirmation/upgrade advised me that it would inevitably be a 'messy process'. In comparing my proposed methodology written in the winter of 2016 to this chapter, there are wide differences in terms of proposed methods and my approach towards participation. What remains is a commitment to a qualitative methodology and interpretivist epistemology that seeks reciprocity, co-construction of knowledge and recognition of the complexities of agency even in positions of vulnerability and marginalization.

In this chapter, I have set out the details of my fieldwork, attempting to provide clarity to what was a fluid, emerging and frequently frustrating process. I have sought to justify my selected methods and to build a series of representations based on the concept of crystallization (Ellingson, 2009). I have explained in some detail my experiences of working with a participatory agenda in this context and have pulled together some conclusions of the lessons I have learnt along the way. I have outlined the collection and analysis of data and spent some time explaining the processes of achieving ethical approval and the complexities of working with multiple stakeholders. My reflections on positionality, I hope, go some way to explore the fluidity of identity in the field and the rigorous critique of self I feel is necessary when faced with the responsibility of representing others.

In the next chapter, I introduce the themes emerging from the empirics of this thesis, with an ethnographic exploration around a street in Rothport, that formed a significant and complex part in the experiences of the young men.

CHAPTER 5: MARLOWE STREET- AT HOME IN THE FIELD

INTRODUCTION

Of all the places where I spent much time during the fieldwork period and beyond, it is Marlowe Street and surrounding areas that seems so key to the experiences of many of the young men seeking asylum in the city and also so central to my own experiences in the field. Relatively early in the fieldwork period, Marlowe Street emerged as a significant space for the young men building new lives in and around Rothport. Prior to this, Marlowe Street served as a social hub for some involved in refugee solidarity work and leftist/green movements in the city. When I first moved to the area in 2016, it was the year of the Brexit referendum, with an apparent victory for narratives of Britishness, national sovereignty and borders. These were narratives that I, and others living and working alongside asylum-seekers, felt as exclusionary. These were narratives of this country which were entirely incongruent with my own sense of belonging. I found a home in and around Marlowe Street. Here, one spoke English or Kurdish, or Arabic or Polish. Here the food was Eritrean, or Afghan, or Pakistani, or Syrian. Here one would find refugees, entrepreneurs, artists, yoga teachers, taxi drivers and migration scholars. One could be simultaneously known and anonymous on Marlowe Street. People might know your name, know you by sight or as someone they had seen at one of the refugee community drop-ins. At the same time, you could 'disappear' on Marlowe Street; few embodiments of 'difference' stood out because 'difference' was in fact the norm.

In 2011, a British tabloid published a feature on Marlowe Street: 'is this the worst street in Britain?', the journalist asked. The article is illustrated with a photo of two women, walking in the dark in short skirts, illuminated only by car headlamps. The street is rife, it states, with violence, murder, prostitution and drugs. A more recent 2015 article from a local media co-operative also features Marlowe Street. Here the journalist reflects on food and hospitality on offer at an East African café; he describes a friendly social hub, delicious food and a sense of community[17]. How does one make sense of these seemingly contradictory accounts? Local friends do not recognise the tabloid description; it is part of a narrative, but not the whole. Marlowe Street is where people work and live, where they raise children and where they pray, where they fight and where they drink. Its uniqueness is in part brought about by its ordinariness as a place where people get on with their everyday lives. Yet aspects of everyday life for some residents are in fact, 'extraordinary' and sometimes illicit and high risk.

In this chapter, I employ empirical material from my use of ethnographic methods to portray a place in the fieldwork that, over the months of data collection with the young men,

[17] In the interests of maintaining anonymity, I have not referenced these two articles.

emerged as highly significant in terms of the framing of experiences and practices of integration. It serves to ground the following chapters of this thesis in the complexities of integration: actively finding safety, creating belonging and building different relationships over time. In addition, this chapter works to anchor the thesis as 'situated', partial knowledge (Haraway, 1991). Entering the field was not an act of self-displacement for me and the spaces of 'home' and 'field' were not so distinct (Katz, 1994); I did not travel abroad for the fieldwork, I remained at home where I lived in community with adult asylum seekers and with other British women who were involved in refugee and asylum seeker solidarity and advocacy. This positionality is a part of the narrative in itself.

This chapter offers a 'rich description' (Geertz, 1973) of a particular context, that captures and establishes main themes running through the thesis. It begins with a description of the street, as I experienced it over and beyond those fieldwork months. Next, it focuses on the relationships within Marlowe Street for the young men, and the role of these relationships in navigating continuity and change. The next section centres on the emergence over time of understandings of 'good' and 'bad' integration, as this relates to Marlowe Street. Finally, I interrogate Marlowe Street as a field site and use this to reflect further upon positionality and its relevance to knowledge production. I conclude with a summary and an outline of the main themes emanating from this chapter.

DESCRIPTIVE OVERVIEW

Marlowe Street falls within the Smithstown ward of Rothport. It is an area with high levels of deprivation, with official statistical data attesting to poor levels of health, high levels of crime and of premature death, in comparison with city averages. Rates of overcrowded housing are also higher than the city's average and a greater proportion of children are entitled to Free School Meals. It is a particularly diverse area, with well over half its residents from BME backgrounds as well as 2/5 of its population born outside of the UK. Unemployment here is the highest in the city[18].

My journal notes from April 2017 speak of the attraction of this area of the city to the young unaccompanied minors with whom I was spending time. I wrote:

> *The young people seem to spend a lot of time in certain areas in Rothport, regularly journeying in from other parts of the city and neighbouring counties as far as 15 miles away, or more than 1-hour bus travel. For the most part, this includes Westford, particularly Marlowe Street, Eddiston, and the city centre. Westford remains a central social and economic hub for refugee and asylum-seeker communities generally. It is ethnically and culturally diverse and offers a range of*

[18] Again, I have not referenced relevant statistics for purposes of anonymity.

cafes, eateries, grocery stores that cater for diverse populations, provide halal food and social and recreational spaces. Marlowe Street primarily, hosts a series of cafes and restaurants with clientele distinguishable by country of origin. If I cycle down Marlowe Street towards the city centre, I pass Kirkuk, a Kurdish restaurant, Maghreb, a kebab and falafel takeaway frequented by Eritreans, Casablanca, a cafe with Algerian customers who sit out front drinking coffee and smoking shisha and Sports Café, a Sudanese establishment.

(Journal notes, 4/17)

In this writing, I capture a picture of Marlowe Street as busy and enticing for the young men. The food and eating establishments were reflective of the diverse cultures and languages of the people who frequented the area, offering both informal employment and social spaces to meet and converse with friends. Marlowe Street and its environs was also home to many organisations and establishments that met some of the needs specific to asylum seekers and refugees. As I wrote in my journal in April 2017:

The Red Cross offers a gym programme whereby asylum-seekers can access Westford Leisure Centre, use the gym, swimming pool and attend certain classes. Westford and neighbouring Eddiston… also offer a collection of existing formal refugee and asylum-seeker organisations. Frontiers is at the top end of Marlowe Street near the city centre and runs from the Catholic church there. Rothport Accommodation Providers uses the space at the Westford Christian Families and Rothport Refugee Solidarity is based at Eddiston Community Centre. These organisations all offer drop-ins, English language lessons, advocacy and a range of other services and recreational activities. The Refuge, a 'first stop' clinic for newly arrived asylum seekers in Rothport, is located nearby at Plumford Health Centre. Rothport on Wheels offers free bicycles to refugees and asylum-seekers… (and) *is nearby.*

(Journal notes, 4/17)

On and around Marlowe Street, therefore, there was an infrastructure to support refugees and asylum seekers in terms of leisure activities, advocacy, English classes, healthcare, and transport. Consequently, Marlowe Street was busy and became something of a social hub, starting quiet first thing in the morning and building steadily as the various establishments opened their doors. Near the leisure centre, the church-affiliated drop in centre Hope Springs, would open its door around 11.30am to serve food and provide an indoor space for the city's homeless. Often a queue would form outside Hope Springs an hour or so before opening, spilling out onto pavements either side of the road.

By mid-afternoon, there was often a police presence on the street, working to disrupt the trade of illicit substances further up the road. For Marlowe Street had another side to its nature, in addition to hospitality for the city's denizens and displaced. This is illustrated strikingly by the story of one young man, who was suspected by the police of being used by criminal gangs operating from Marlowe Street. Through my volunteer role with YPHS, I became aware of these concerns, as the extract from the email below shows:

> *As you are all aware a complex strategy meeting was called today by Social Services to air concerns in respect of some of the UASC clients attending the* [redacted] *on Marlowe Street and possible risks of CSE, trafficking and other criminal activity… One of the actions from the meeting is that professionals do not attend the* [redacted] *and discourage the UASC clients from doing so. The police … are looking into the people who attend the cafe and any possible criminal activity going on there.*
>
> (email from YPHS Broomshire, 6/17)

Marlowe Street, therefore, was home to seemingly contradictory elements. On the one hand, it was a social hub for migrants including refugees and asylum-seekers; in some cases, it was a home for the homeless. It was a welcoming place for some people, including those who were not welcome in other parts of the city (security guards at the shopping centre in town, for instance, would regularly move on rough sleepers or those begging). It provided vital facilities for many people who were otherwise excluded from much of the city. It was also a space for leisure, for sitting around drinking tea and eating favourite foods, for a time of familiarity and safety amidst a seemingly harsh and unfamiliar time and place. Yet, at the same, it was suspected of being a space of danger, a space of police surveillance, a space where the young men were prohibited to hang out.

My own experiences of living near Marlowe Street were those of exceptionality; I felt it to be something of a bubble away from the politics of exclusion associated with some debates around Brexit, particularly in relation to the rhetoric around migration and refugees at the time. My journal notes of April 2017 read:

> *Westford is also home to a range of individuals and communities who position themselves in solidarity to refugees and asylum-seekers. My own home is shared with one Afghan and one Kurdish/Iraqi man whilst the house next door is home to a young man from Libya and another from Zimbabwe. These individuals are either seeking asylum or have recently been granted leave to remain.* (Journal notes 4/17)

I experienced it as a space in which people came into the streets for both organised events and ad hoc acts of resistance or protest. There are two examples of this I include here. The first event concerns the annual Iftar event on Station Approach, near Marlowe Street. Every year during Ramadan, Muslims and non-Muslims come together to break the fast for that

day. It is organised by many local community groups, including Rothport Muslim Cultural Society and the local Somali Assembly. Numbers of attendees increase year on year, spilling out of Station Approach onto adjoining streets. When I attended in 2017, I met Aarash and Kadir, two young Afghan asylum-seekers I had befriended during my fieldwork. They were volunteering in the distribution of meals to guests: 'We will give you more!', Aarash said to me. The Iftar was a space where Muslim residents offered hospitality to non-Muslims; we sat and ate together, we visited the new mosque, and some non-Muslims attempted one day of the Ramadan fast in order to experience breaking the fast with their Muslim neighbours.

The second event occurred one October night. A local South Asian man was taken into custody by immigration officers on the understanding that he was in the UK illegally. Before the officers were able to remove the man, local residents formed a blockade, prevented the immigration van from leaving. Other residents joined the spontaneous protest, bringing hot chocolate, and bedding for those lying down in front of the van. In the early hours of the morning, the protestors dis-banded and the man was taken into custody. Local people spoke to the press, stating their resistance to the violence of immigration enforcement that targeted their friends and neighbours.

These are just two stories out of the hundreds that could be told from this time period about this place. They are stories I have chosen to tell because they are both stories that sit at odds with dominant, top-down narratives of integration as outlined in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Based on a simplistic premise on the part of the Home Office of the self-segregation of predominantly Muslim communities (Home Office, 2001), discourses of community cohesion render Muslims in the UK as somehow 'other' and different (Kassimeris and Jackson, 2012). Both narratives of community cohesion and counter terrorism are framed in terms of keeping society safe and cohesive (ibid.). With disproportionate loci of intervention and surveillance on Muslim communities, it may follow that Muslims are both unsafe, and a disruptive influence that is somehow external to society (ibid.). The story of Marlowe Street's community Iftar counters this narrative, demonstrating that Muslims are in fact integral to society in the form of hosts; it contradicts the story underpinning community cohesion discourse: that diverse societies do not get on, that multiculturalism has failed and that lives are lived in parallel. One young man from a community organisation representing young people with heritage from the Horn of Africa, reported:

> *This brings everyone together and shows we are all an equal part of this community*[19]

[19] Again, I have not referenced this quotation for reasons of anonymity.

There are commonalities with the story I have included of the immigration removal protest. Since the 1990s, the immigration policy generally, and asylum-policy in particular, has constructed migrants, especially asylum-seekers, as a threat (Mulvey, 2010). Within this narrative, practices such as immigration removal feature to keep society 'safe' by pulling out that which threatens the integrity of the whole (ibid.). The protest I have described above is contrary to this narrative; it demonstrates a neighbourhood that sees itself and behaves in opposition to such government policy. In addition, the supposed 'other' in this narrative is revealed in fact to be a friend, a neighbour, intertwined with the community members with ties of social bonds and social bridges.

A Space of Continuity

Early on in the fieldwork, I began to refer to 'social hubs' in my journal. I compared spaces such as Marlowe Street to an area outside of Rothport, Norbury, where two of the young men I knew had originally been accommodated, before being moved at their own request to foster families within Rothport itself. Norbury I referred to as 'non-hub. In my journal notes from February 2017, I wrote about Zoran, a young Kurdish boy, who was asking to be moved from Norbury to a foster family near Marlowe Street:

> *He wants to be with a family… He is waiting to hear about a placement with a family he met last week… He liked them and would like to live there. It's in Westford, which would be so much better than being out in Norbury. He would be near the gym, he could easily go to college, go to Rothport Youth Works. I think the team at Newcourt House seem helpful and welcoming and respectful. It is warm and clean there. But he is still out on a limb.*
>
> (Journal notes, 2//17)

Marlowe Street was busy during the evenings and night-times. There were always people around, some working, some talking or drinking tea. It was very much a social use of public space. Areas such as Norbury, where some of the young men were accommodated, were residential and quiet; social life seemed to take place inside the home in the family so that, if one did not have a family, it could be quite an isolating experience. Abraham was initially accommodated near Norbury in supported accommodation but asked to move early in 2017. In an interview with me in October 2017, he told me it was:

> *…very far from college, from city centre, from Westford… very lonely.*
>
> (Interview: Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17)

Many of the young men I knew spent much of their time on Marlowe Street during their first few months after arriving in Rothport. Abraham told me:

You know the first year… I didn't study at all. I would just like to go to college and then I would come back to Westford and then I would just play with friends. You know, we would go places and then speak in Somali most of the time.

(Interview: Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17)

Kathleen Smith, the manager at YPHS in Broomshire, reflected on the significance of the Marlowe Street spaces for the young men in those early months following arrival:

… *what do we tend to do generally as human beings when we're feeling really vulnerable and we're quite frightened and we're out of our depth? We navigate back home. And they* (unaccompanied minors) *can't do that so that's the closest thing to navigating back home, isn't it? And maybe what we need to do going forward as a local authority and partner agencies working within it is to make more of those links around keeping young people safe within those communities. Because what we don't want to say is 'you can't go there' because that's not fair either… it's important… That was the strong feeling around the Kurdish café… we introduced them to the Kurdish café because we thought it was a really good idea that they integrated into, that they had a little bit of links. Have somewhere where you feel you have a home for five minutes.*

(Interview: Kathleen Smith, 9/17)

It was therefore acknowledged by the staff at YPHS and others that the cafés and people on Marlowe Street provided a really important sense of home and familiarity in an otherwise strange and even hostile place and time. There are parallels here with the phenomenon of 'community moments' discussed in the work of Lewis (2010). Here, there is comfort in the temporary relief from learning a new language and attempting to master new cultural norms (ibid.). There is a sense here that the Marlowe Street cafés and the relationships that were built therein enabled the young men to acclimatise and to develop a sense of safety and belonging for that period of time (Kohli, 2011). Many of the young men continued to go to Marlowe Street several months after their arrival in Rothport. Abdullah, a young man from Sudan, told me that he went to Westford for the mosque once a week:

It's like every Friday because I go there sometime. We go like Westford and then sometimes we go to the café, we drink tea and coffee, speak Sudanese, eat food, that's it. (Interview: Abdullah, 10/17)

Farid, another young man also from Sudan, continued to frequent Westford and Marlowe Street regularly, having been in Rothport for around one year. He told me:

… all my time is in Rothport- I visit my brother, the Sudanese restaurant- you should come. It's on Marlowe Street and they have Sudanese food- it's nice, of course!

(Interview: Farid, 10/17)

Farid had been brought to Rothport from the camp in Calais specifically to be reunited with his brother. As his brother lived in refugee accommodation in Westford, it was of course natural that he should spend his time here and enjoy eating the food that was familiar to both of them. He added that he felt he did not get support from anyone else:

> *Just my brother looks after me. That's why I come to Westford. At the moment I don't have a kitchen because I live in a crashpad… it's lovely to have a brother.*

(Interview: Farid, 10/17)

For Farid, there was support available on Marlowe Street through his brother and the wider Sudanese community that would meet at the café there. More broadly, I observed other young men finding support from young adult men who were from their countries of origin but had been in Rothport longer. My journal notes from early spring 2017 note:

> *Kurdish adults are informally supporting the new arrivals; for example, they are acting as interpreters, letting the young people hang around and drink tea, and keeping them 'on the right path'.*

(Journal Notes, April 2017)

This 'right path' was widely acknowledged but rarely specified. Abdullah described it as:

> *… like people can trick you, you go drink alcohol, something like that because it is no good. That is no good because we are young people… sometimes some person doesn't like education… it will help you if go education. It's important for your future.*

(Interview: Abdullah, 10/17)

Bashir, also from Sudan, offered some advice to those unaccompanied minors just arriving in the city. He said:

> *If I were to give advice to new people coming to Rothport, I would say Rothport is a good place. Here they are going to help you. I will tell them they should go to Rothport Refugee Solidarity, Frontiers, and to Rothport Youth Works. I'd say not to follow bad people- the ones who do drugs and things like that. I'd say they should stay with good people- that's a good way to go.*

(Interview: Bashir, 10/17)

There was thus a recognition of the positive features of Marlowe Street and the broader neighbourhood alongside the need to avoid certain negative aspects, such as drug usage. The 'good way to go' involved prioritising education, in order to secure a good job in the future. Some of the young men were voicing a particular path of integration that was 'good'

and Marlowe Street could provide role models, in the form of social bonds, to help the young men stay on this 'good path'.

I would often arrange to meet with Zoran on Marlowe Street; we both understood 'Ali's shop' as a useful marker. Following his relocation from Norbury to a foster family in Westford, Zoran became acquainted with the Kurdish men who worked on and around Marlowe Street. One evening I was meeting a friend for falafel on Marlowe Street, when I saw Zoran in one of the grocery stores run by Kurds. Zoran greeted me and explained as best he could that he was drinking tea with his friends. I later wrote in my journal:

> *Zoran has developed his own social circle on Marlowe Street so perhaps it is better that he has been able to do so without dependency on me.*
>
> (Journal notes, April 2017)

My concern had been that, as supportive as I tried to be, I was at least 20 years older than Zoran, and from a very different background and leading a very different life. I therefore thought it was positive that he should have friendships with men his own age and from a similar background to his own. I wanted him to have people he could look up to who looked like him. Yet I was also aware that many of the Kurds working on Marlowe Street were working illegally, and that, were there to be an immigration raid, there might be difficulties for Zoran if he were caught up in this. Legally, adults working formally with those under 18 undergo a series of safeguarding checks; this was not possible in a situation where many in this community were anxious to stay under the radar. My friend, Ali, who worked in one of the Kurdish shops on Marlowe Street, assured me that Zoran was with good people. Yet, as I noted in my journal at the time:

> *This assurance of Zoran's safety, however, has come through informal, unofficial channels. From an institutional safeguarding perspective, Zoran is possibly viewed as safer in his foster home on his own than with those offering him friendship and company.*
>
> (Journal notes, April 2017)

I felt conflicted as I recognised Zoran's capacity to make his own decisions and had witnessed the profound loneliness and sense of isolation he was experiencing prior to making friends on Marlowe Street. There was a sense that Marlowe Street was providing Zoran with relationships in the form of social bonds that enabled him to actively build a sense of safety and belonging. There was a place of support on Marlowe Street where adult men would act as guides and mentors for the young men, and who were to an extent keen to co-operate with parties such as myself, who were prepared to accept information off the record. Yet at the same time, I was formally volunteering with YPHS, and thus had a duty of care, which necessitated sharing information with social care professionals and flagging

potential safeguarding issues. There was also a broader concern that not all support offered on Marlowe Street was benign and details emerged in the summer of 2017 of suspected CSE. There were men on Marlowe Street, the police alleged, who were looking to exploit young men like Zoran for financial gain. In this context of possible exploitation, I wanted to behave in a way that acknowledged Zoran as agentive, as making decisions and as striving to improve his own situation. I chose to meet Zoran on Marlowe Street but in a different café run by some friends of mine. I told Zoran I could not meet him in Ali's shop anymore. Zoran then chose to keep aspects of his life that he knew were proscribed by social services hidden from me. This way I kept myself as a presence in Zoran's life, so he could call on me if he needed to. If I were to be some sort of a friend to Zoran, it had to be on his own terms.

I have sought to demonstrate that Marlowe Street, through its cafés, shops and the relationships that were built here, was a site of some continuity for the young men, especially when they first arrived in Rothport. In a context of much uncertainty and unfamiliarity, the cafés of Marlowe Street offered familiar food, language and customs that served as a comforting repose. There were networks of support for the young men here, where men from their own countries of origin could serve as guides and mentors. Less well-known were the networks of exploitation, which posed a risk to the young men in terms of their personal safety and their right to remain in the UK long-term.

For some of the young men I came to know, the relationship with Marlowe Street shifted over time. In the next section, I explore a sense of 'moving on' from Marlowe Street, that was a prominent feature for some of the young men as they developed belonging and success in their new lives.

A Space of Change

One afternoon in October 2017, Abraham, Ibrahim and I were walking through Westford to the library. Ibrahim was pushing my bike for me and Abraham was telling me about other Eritreans he knows in Rothport. He said, quite casually, 'you have to remember why you are here'. I thought nothing of it at the time; we were busy navigating the traffic, stopping to talk to other young men they know. Later, in the library, I asked Abraham what he meant by this. He explained:

> *I don't want to be like friends who spend a lot of time in Marlowe Street café. I have friends, they have been in Rothport for three years, for four years, and they still study with me on my level.*
>
> Interview with Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17

He wanted a good job, he continued, and knew he had to study hard and learn English to get this. He added:

> *Even when you are in a safe country, and then you go back to your country. If you speak English… it will help you to be something in your country*

Ibrahim agreed with him, although he was less critical in tone:

> *I know lots of my friends, they came here, like some of them came here like ten years or maybe even more and sadly some of them don't speak English. They can speak but they don't speak very well.*

Ibrahim reflected further on the four years since his arrival in Rothport:

> *The first year… I didn't study at all. I would just like go to college and then I would come back and then I would come to Westford and then I would just play with friends. You know, we would just go places and then speak in Somali, most of the time… and then, that didn't help. You know, my English didn't improve that much…*

Ibrahim was conversing in fluent English and I knew that he would be completing his GCSEs this year, beginning his A levels the following year, and was aiming to go to medical school; I asked him what had changed. 'Because', Ibrahim continued:

> *I wanted to change. I didn't want to do what I was doing… So I tried to come to Westford, you know, less often.*

Abraham agreed that he had had the same problem. 'What made you decide to change?', I asked.

> *I don't want to be like someone else who spends a lot of time in Westford café… and then I meet a lot of people, you know, from different countries. They say to me: 'If you want to make better life in England then you have to study and you have to do education first.'*

Without good English, Abraham went on, you would not be able to get a good job. Ibrahim agreed saying, 'I think English is very, very important'.

The cafés of Marlowe Street had been attractive to Abraham and Ibrahim when they first arrived in Rothport. At this time, neither one spoke much English and so much seemed so new. Ibrahim had come to the UK with his father, but Abraham had come alone and had no contact with friends or family from home in Eritrea. On Marlowe Street, Abraham and Ibrahim could meet and develop friendships and speak Tigrinya and Somali respectively. There was a degree of relative comfort and ease, due to language and cultural familiarity, to frequenting Marlowe Street when all else seemed unfamiliar. Marlowe Street was a space of safety. Both young men realised, however, that they were not learning English as they would like, and that this would negatively impact the life plans that they had for themselves, that had motivated them to leave home and seek asylum in the first place. Both recognised the need to attend Marlowe Street less frequently, and to concentrate instead on education and becoming fluent in English. Abraham and Ibrahim had their own path to 'success' (Kohli,

2011) in mind and, in choosing to attend Marlowe Street less frequently, there were being active in building this path.

There was a sense from some of the young men that they had 'graduated' from Marlowe Street and Westford more generally. Abdul, Bashir, Raheem, Zakir and others, who had been in the UK for nearly a year, continued to visit Marlowe Street from time to time but much less frequently than when they had first arrived in Rothport. For the most part, they were at college, at youth club, taking English lessons at The Crossing, or engaging in additional opportunities to develop their education and training. For example, Zakir took part in a summer programme organised by the National Citizenship Service. Abdullah told me:

> *… if you go every day, you can't learn English. Because when I go speak Arabic, just Arabic. I don't speak English with Sudanese people…*
>
> (Interview: Abdul, 10/17)

For many of these young men, the acquisition of English was integral to their ambitions and their sense of purpose. These young men spoke of becoming doctors, architects, entrepreneurs, dentists. Their path to these prestigious professions involved GCSEs, A Levels and university and for this, English was essential. For Ibrahim and Abraham, this ambition was entwined with a wider motivation. Ibrahim told me:

> *You know, when we came here, we all have this one mission in our lives, to study, to find a job, so we can… Basically, we can build our lives. We didn't have, you know, the opportunities, you know, back home, that we have here in this country.*
>
> (Interview: Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17)

I recall a conversation I had with the UASC support worker at YPHS, Michael, relatively early in the fieldwork. For some of the young men, he felt, there was a pressure for everything to be good in their new life in the UK: 'it's supposed to be paradise. What they've given up most of their life for.' He commented on the pressure these young men were carrying:

> *Often the family members have paid for them to get here… 15, 16- year olds having to travel across miles and miles and miles on their own and having to cope. And then everything has to be good because their parents, their family have given up their family fortune to get here.*
>
> (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

Therefore, for some of these young men, there was a huge pressure to 'move on' with their lives, to achieve educationally and professionally and to not 'get stuck' in the cafés on Marlowe. These spaces were still valued for occasional visits and moments of familiarity, but they were not to interfere with the ambitions and designs the young men had for their futures.

Conversely, some young men chose to remain on Marlowe Street on a more 'full-time' basis. Zoran, for example, spent almost all his waking hours there. He was excluded from college in the May of 2017, and there were difficulties in his re-enrolment in the September of that year. Consequently, he had a period of several months over the summer with little other structure in his day-to-day life. He had stopped attending Rothport Youth Works and was not interested in attending any of the refugee community organisations anymore. He befriended a Kurdish man, slightly older than him, who encouraged Zoran to take up boxing. Zoran experienced difficulties with the UK asylum system early on in the process. He was age determined as adult, although he was able to challenge this successfully. He also had his claim to asylum rejected.

The different relationships the young men had with Marlowe Street are illustrative of the heterogeneity of the young men, of their ambitions and motivations, and of their prior experiences pre-flight. For some, such as Abraham and Abdullah, there was a long-term motivation to be successful financially and socially, which meant, in these cases, working hard at college and accessing higher education. For others, like Zoran, motivation seemed to be about making money and feeling secure with one's own community in the short-term. Marlowe Street served different roles in the lives of these young men and, for some of them, these roles shifted with the passing of time.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have sought to convey a sense of a particular place in the fieldwork that was pivotal to many of the experiences of the young men and also highly relevant to my own viewpoint and positionality during these fieldwork months. It is my intention to portray an area of the city where important relationships were forged and sustained, and which provided a sense of familiarity and safety for many of the young men, particularly in the first few months following their arrival . Rothport, although a relatively wealthy city, is significantly segregated along socio-economic and racial lines. Westford is not an affluent area; it is faced with ongoing challenges of long-term unemployment, income deprivation and associated poor health outcomes. In a national climate of increasing xenophobia and denigration of migrants, there were voices within Westford that worked against marginalisation and in solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers. Marlowe Street was diverse, offering social spaces and company for many who were otherwise excluded from

society. At the same time, there were behaviours in certain premises that were criminal and violent, that were entirely antithetical to the wellbeing and safety of the young men.

For some of the young men, Marlowe Street was a space of continuity for a period of time. Frequenting Marlowe Street became, however, a behaviour that had to be rationed and curtailed; Abraham, Ibrahim, Abdullah and others recognised that if they were to learn English and concentrate on their studies, they would need to remove themselves from Marlowe Street's cafés and place themselves instead in other activities that were congruent with the futures they were trying to build. For Abdullah and Bashir, Westford offered mosque every Friday, and others continued to make use of the leisure centre. However, other parts of the city opened up for them; as I was writing up my thesis, I would sometimes see Abdullah and others in Starbucks in the city centre shopping mall, with their fellow students from their A level classes.

Other young men, such as Zoran, continued to base themselves on Marlowe Street and to integrate themselves into these communities, rejecting alternatives offered at college or through different youth provisions in the city. These are the stories I know less about; partly due to language differences but partly due to the nature of some of the activities taking place on Marlowe Street, which were alleged to be criminal. Consequently, I was told little, if anything.

This chapter has introduced some of the key themes that emerged from the empirical material produced through field research. These include, for example, the nature of the relationships the young men built and the changes and fluctuations in these relationships. Other themes centre on the mediating effects of place on experiences of integration for the young men, as well as the expectations of integration as revealed in the practices of relevant social care professionals. This chapter has also been an opportunity to introduce some of the young men who were participants in the fieldwork, and whose voices form much of the empirical material that comes in the following chapters. The next chapter focuses on the young people's experiences of the asylum system.

CHAPTER 6 ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION

> *… Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties*
>
> (United Nations, 1989, Article 22)

INTRODUCTION

Most of the interventions, the institutional responses to, and the support for unaccompanied minors is inherently ambiguous: combining care with control. The asylum system is unique in that it is experienced solely in terms of control. Therefore, I focus in this chapter on the asylum system before moving in Chapter 7 to discuss the domains of social care, accommodation and formal education. The young men's experiences of seeking asylum merit their own chapter as leave to remain entitles a young person to basic rights and protections including recourse to public funds and protection against detention and refoulement. Without leave to remain, former UASCs are, 'functionally stateless' (Bhabha, 2009, p.410). All other activities, processes and achievements, upon which a young person could build something of a new life in the UK, ultimately hinged on the acquisition of this right to abode. This chapter, therefore, offers an important element of the overall understanding I seek to convey; navigating the asylum system is not simply another milestone in the integration of unaccompanied minors. It is, for the most part, a prolonged, inhuman and contradictory system, which wields incredible power over the lives of the young men. To understand the ways in which the unaccompanied minors in this thesis make new, integrated lives for themselves, one needs first to understand the asylum system.

I begin this chapter with an exposition of the UK asylum system, demonstrating the complexity of a system grounded in a combination of international, European and domestic law, through which young men must navigate. This is followed by a discussion, drawing on the work of Crawley (2009, 2010, 2011), of the system for UASCs and the specificities of cultures of disbelief with regards to unaccompanied children. It is in light of this discussion that I interpret the empirical material that follows. In Part 2 I set out the main attributes of the asylum system: dispersal and legal representation, and expertise and analyses. These are critiqued with findings from fieldwork interviews alongside complementary existing literature. I then illustrate each attribute with experiences of some of the young men; this provides an opportunity to further introduce the young men, whose experiences of integration inform this thesis. These experiences are explored further in later chapters.

In this chapter I seek to demonstrate the workings and effects of an often protracted and highly arbitrary system of asylum, exacerbated by legislation limiting legal aid provision and flawed analyses underscored by cultures of disbelief. For many young men, the experience of seeking asylum is highly stressful; for a few, the failure to gain leave to remain or to be recognised as a child will lead to destitution and detention.

THE UK ASYLUM SYSTEM

The UK asylum system is informed by a combination of international, European and domestic law, which offers protection against non-refoulement. Established in the context of mass displacement following the Second World War, the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees sets out a duty, on the part of signatory states, to offer protection to any individual who:

> *Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.*
>
> *(UN General Assembly, 1951: Article 1(A)(2))*

This law still stands, although adherence of some state parties to the convention has weakened (Gatrell, 2013; Webber, 2018). It is integral to the UK system, with government information stating:

> *You must apply for asylum if you want to stay in the UK as a refugee. To be eligible you must have left your country and be unable to go back because you fear persecution.* (HM Government, 2020)

Additional layers of protection for those claiming refugee status are provided by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (European Court of Human Rights, 1950), which was formally incorporated into UK law with the Human Rights Act of 1998 (HM Government, 1998). Article 3 of the ECHR, for example, prohibits the use of torture, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, meaning the UK government is prohibited from returning an individual to a country where they may face such treatment (Owers, 2003). A substantial body of case law offers further substance and interpretation to existing legal frameworks (Yeo, 2015). In the text below, I set out the process for claiming asylum in the UK.

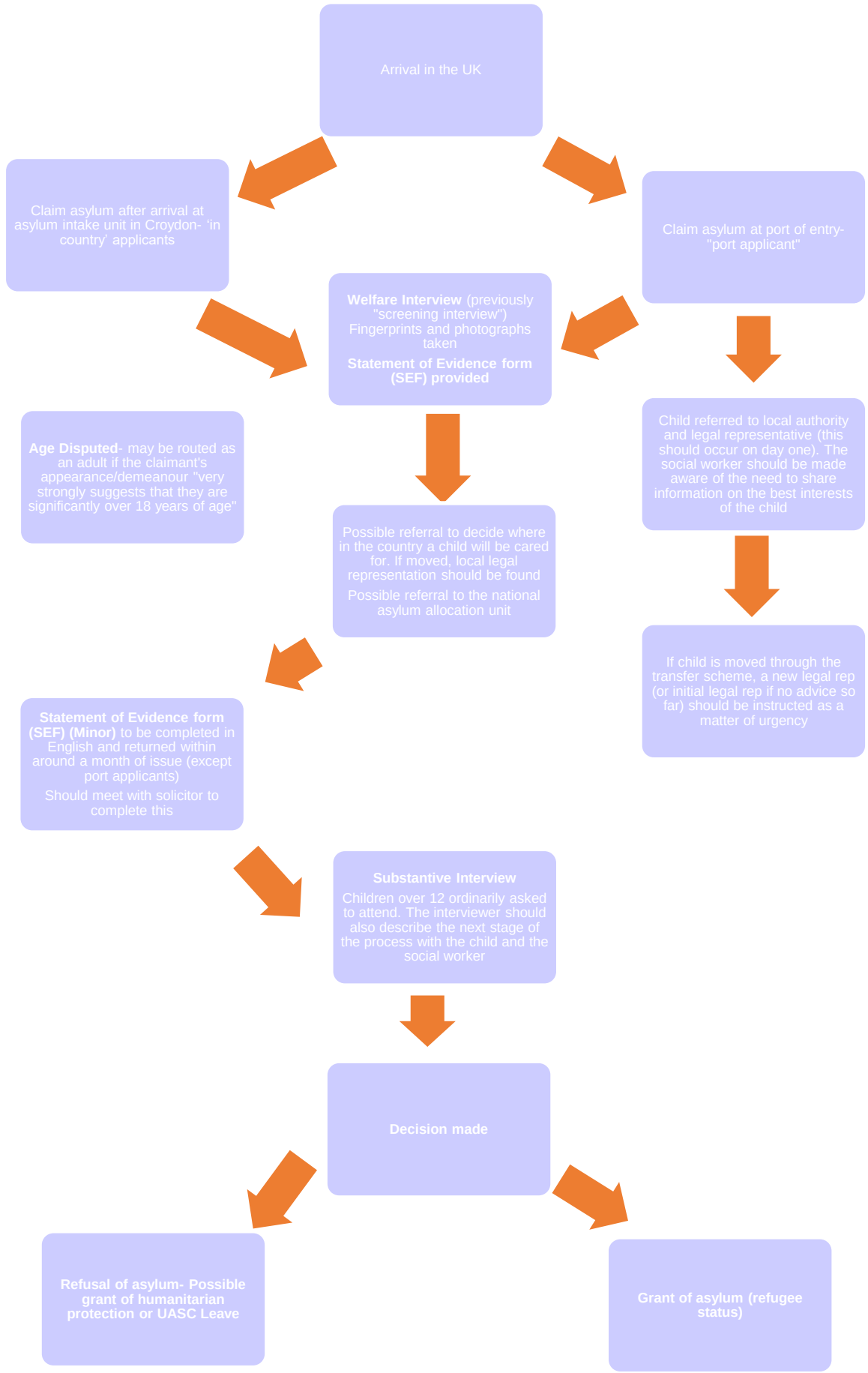
The Process of Applying for Asylum

As is the case for adults seeking asylum in the UK, unaccompanied children can claim asylum either at the port of entry or 'in country' (at a time after entry into the UK, normally at the national intake unit in Croydon or, depending on the location of the child, at another immigration centre in the UK) (CCLC, 2017a). If an unaccompanied child's claim for asylum is rejected by the Home Office and they have also been denied humanitarian protection[20], they will usually be granted 'UASC Leave' (CCLC, 2017a). UASC leave is granted when there are no adequate reception arrangements available in the country to which he or she would be returned. It lasts for 30 months or until the child reaches 17½, whichever is sooner (CCLC, 2017c). It is important that a child with UASC Leave secures a more durable form of leave to remain once they reach 17 ½, as s/he will no longer be eligible to remain in the country and s/he will be liable to detention and/or removal once s/he reaches 18. Consequently, UASC leave is a particularly uncertain and tenuous form of leave to remain.

In the autumn of 2017, Rothport Refugee Solidarity (RRS) organised a training event provided by the Coram Children's Legal Centre. This was in response to a need expressed by many other organisations working with young asylum-seekers for knowledge and understanding about the asylum process for young people. The following overview is informed by details shared at this event. Figure 19 below shows the process:

[20] A grant of humanitarian protection may be granted to an asylum-seeker if they do not qualify as a refugee but 'substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to the country of return, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm and is unable, or, owing to such a risk, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country' (Vassiliou, 2019, no page). This differs from the grounds for refugee status, where a person must be at risk of serious harm 'for a specific reason such as their race, religion, or political opinion' (ibid.). For example, a person at risk if returned merely because of their presence in a place of war, rather than specifically targeted because of his ethnicity or religion, would in theory be eligible for a grant of humanitarian protection rather than refugee status (leave to remain). A grant of humanitarian protection provides similar protections to refugee status, but is considered a lesser form of protection due to limitations in areas such as foreign travel and higher education, for example (ibid.)

Figure 19 The Asylum Process in the UK, (CCLC, 2017b, p.18)



Having applied for asylum either at the port of entry or at the asylum intake unit in Croydon, the next step in the asylum process is known as the welfare interview. At this point, the child applying for asylum should only be asked to provide a brief account of why and how they travelled to the UK and their family history. Unaccompanied minors aged 5 and above have their fingerprints taken, which are then checked on a central European database, Eurodac, to verify if the child has previously claimed asylum in another EU country. If this is proved to be the case then, under the Dublin III arrangements, that EU country would be required to take responsibility for the asylum applicant, who would be returned there (CCLC, 2017b). The child should receive a blank Statement of Evidence Form (SEF), at the welfare interview. This is the asylum application form to be submitted to the Home Office, with the assistance of a legal representative, within the timeframe stipulated (normally 28 days).

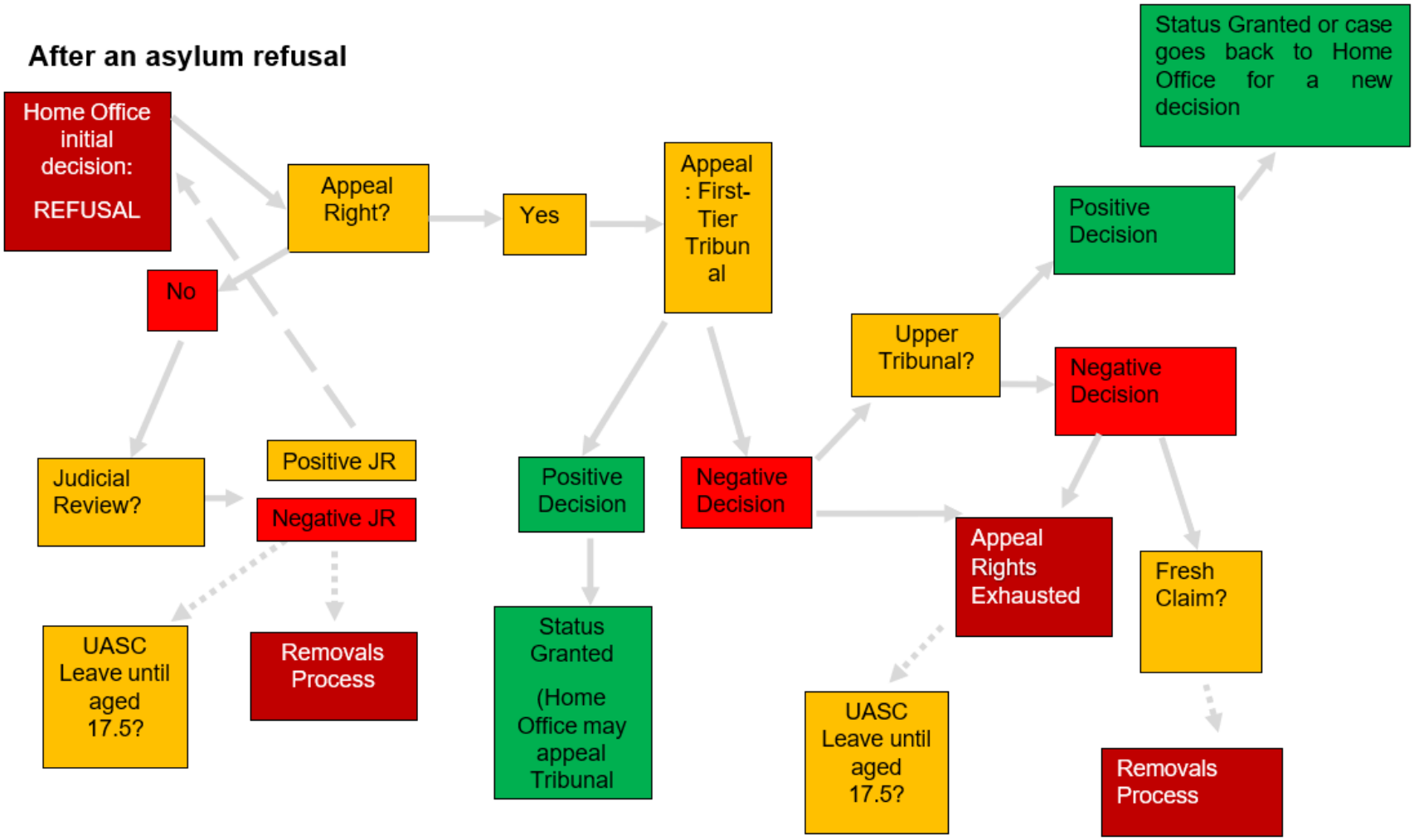
Where the child is over 12 years old, they are interviewed regarding the substance of their claim for asylum. The purpose of this interview is to establish if the child is at risk of persecution as set out in the 1951 Convention and/or is at risk of 'serious harm or ill treatment that breaches Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights' (CCLC, 2016, p.3). Children must be interviewed by a specially trained member of Home Office staff and an interpreter must be available if necessary (CCLC, 2016). The child should also be accompanied by a responsible adult who is not a police officer, immigration officer or an officer of the Home Office. According to Home Office regulations:

> *It is not the function of the responsible adult to answer questions on behalf of the child, but they may intervene if they consider that the child is becoming distressed or tired and a break is required.*
>
> (Home Office, 2017, p.46)

The Home Office states that it aims to resolve initial asylum claims of children within six months and will normally communicate this decision through the child's legal representative (CCLC, 2017b). If the asylum claim has been refused, it is possible for the child to appeal against the decision; this includes the right to appeal when a more limited form of leave to remain is granted (upgrade appeal). The appeals process is complex and takes place through a two-tier tribunal system. Following an asylum refusal, the claimant can appeal to the First-tier tribunal; should this be unsuccessful, the claimant can ask for permission to appeal to the Upper Tribunal. If this permission is refused, the claimant can apply for judicial review. If the claimant is allowed to appeal to the Upper Tribunal but receives a negative decision, then he or she can ask permission to appeal to higher courts only on the basis of an error of law. If the claimant is granted permission to appeal to the higher courts and the appeal is allowed, this may result in the granting of refugee status or it may mean that the appeal is sent back to the First-tier tribunal to be reconsidered (CCLC, 2017b). Importantly,

the Home Office has the same appeal rights if a decision is made in favour of the claimant. Figure 20 below, taken from Right to Remain (2018) illustrates this process.

Figure 20 After an asylum refusal (Right to Remain Toolkit, 2018)



The process of seeking asylum can be, therefore, protracted and complicated, particularly at the appeal stage. Access to good legal representation is essential in this process, particularly as UASCs are usually new to the country and may not understand what is being said. The requirement for a responsible adult also reflects a recognition of the additional needs of children claiming asylum alone; the young men I knew were often allocated a support worker from Young People's Housing Services (YPHS), a charity based in Broomshire contracted to meet the social care needs of UASCs over 16. The YPHS support workers were a continuous presence and support at solicitor's appointments and other relevant stages of the process. This can, to an extent, mitigate against the emotional and mental demands of the system on the young man.

Critique of the Asylum System for Unaccompanied Children

The following section is concerned with criticisms of the UK asylum system for unaccompanied children and builds on the literature regarding age assessment discussed in Chapter 2. The UK asylum system has, in recent decades, emerged as 'an ever-more punitive regulatory system', with increasing use of detention, exclusion from healthcare and social housing, prohibition on paid employment and increasing levels of enforced destitution (Webber, 2012, p.39). Whilst those recognised as under 18 are protected from many draconian policies, including destitution, unaccompanied children are less likely than adult asylum-seekers to be granted leave to remain and are more likely to be granted a discretionary form of leave that expires upon adulthood (Crawley, 2011). Such a discrepancy may be attributed to the failure on the part of asylum decision-makers to take account of child-specific forms of persecution, such as forced marriage or military recruitment (Lidén and Rusten, 2007). Yet this provides only a partial explanation.

To be credible, asylum-seekers are expected, particularly on the part of Home Office agents, to retell:

> *a logical and internally-consistent story with a sufficient but not excessive display of emotion, victimization and helplessness in order to be granted the identity of 'refugee'*
>
> (Carver, 2019, p.219)

In any given situation, it is not unusual for an individual to vary autobiographical accounts over multiple retellings; in the situation of an asylum claim, the individual may have witnessed high levels of violence and disruption that necessarily impact upon memory recall (Herlihy et al., 2002). This is exacerbated further for unaccompanied children, however, who may only have a partial understanding of the circumstances prompting their flight from the country of origin and may not know the details of the journey to the UK (Crawley, 2010). Children may have been protected from information that necessitated their flight or they

themselves may remain silent, or relate only partial narratives, in order to protect their families back home (ibid.).

The Home Office's own guidance (2017), particularly in relation to the substantive interview, stipulates the need for child-friendly procedures and the requirement for case workers to be trained in interviewing children. Current guidance, for example, stipulates that the interviewer should:

> *always interview in a sensitive manner using appropriate tone, body language and eye contact with the child during the interview and use vocabulary that is appropriate to the child's age, level of understanding and to their personal situation*

and

> *take time to establish a rapport with the child, for example by means of a short informal conversation with the child on a topic unrelated to their claim, before starting the substantive interview as this… helps the child to relax*
>
> (ibid., p.45)

This guidance in part responds to the UK's status as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which mandates signatory states to ensure the best interests of the child are a priority in all spheres of decision-making (Lidén and Rusten, 2007). As Lidén and Rusten assert (ibid., p.277-278), 'The assessment of what is in the interests of each individual child requires a comprehensive consideration of the child's experiences, vulnerabilities and protection needs'. The stipulation on the part of the Home Office that case workers adopt child-friendly procedures stems from the requirement, via the UNCRC (1989), that the asylum process ensures that the best interests of the child, alongside the child's right of participation, are upheld.

Despite such guidelines, the Joint Committee on Human Rights reported in 2013/14:

> *The best interests of unaccompanied migrant children must be at the heart of all asylum and immigration processes affecting them. However we find that immigration concerns are too often given priority instead.*
>
> (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2013, p.3)

The Joint Committee reported testimony from the Coram Children's Legal Centre stating that:

> *asylum-seeking and migrant children's rights remain subsidiary to the government's restrictive interpretation that the public interest rests solely in maintaining effective immigration control.*
>
> (CCLC report to Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2013, pp., p.12)

These concerns are echoed in the academic literature. For example, Crawley's (2010) research with separated children in the UK found evidence of Home Office staff conducting substantive interviews with UASCS in a manner that was adversarial and cynical. In 2006 at the Asylum Screening Unit in Croydon, Crawley observed interviews with young men that were conducted in such a way that children were only able or willing to provide restricted 'thin' accounts of their story (Crawley, 2010). Research has demonstrated the necessity of good quality questioning in investigative interviews to allow children to respond with accuracy and completeness (Lamb and Fauchier, 2001; Goodman and Quas, 2008; Larsson and Lamb, 2009). However, Crawley witnessed Home Office interviews that tended to be comprised of 'narrow, directive' questions rather than broader 'invitations' (Crawley, 2010, p.166). Crawley (ibid.) also found that the interviewers' questions were based on assumptions, such as regular, formal education, that were not always relevant to many young asylum seekers. Typically, questions posed to children applying for asylum tended to be based upon Western-centric notions of childhood as a time of play, schooling and protection from the 'adult' worlds of politics and violence (Crawley, 2010). Such assumptions reflect a broader failure of policies and practices comprising the asylum system to account for experiences of childhood in non-Western societies, with implications for the asylum claims of unaccompanied children (Crawley, 2011). When young asylum-seekers relate experiences of childhood that are not congruent with interviewers' expectations, they are frequently either judged to be lying or else it is decided that the child must really be an adult in disguise (ibid.).

I now move to describe the asylum process in terms of its effects viewed from the situation on the ground that I encountered in fieldwork. This serves not only to enrich contextual understandings of the asylum process for UASCs but also to demonstrate how this system is practised and the ramifications of such practices for the young men. First, I offer an account of the significance of the system of dispersal for UASCs and the issue of access to legal representation. Second, I describe the array of expertise and analyses employed by the Home Office in determining the veracity of an asylum claim. I then illustrate each section with stories of some of the young men claiming asylum, demonstrating the ways in which the asylum system is experienced.

THE (DIS)FUNCTIONING OF THE ASYLUM SYSTEM

Through fieldwork, I observed an asylum process that was protracted, confusing and distressing for young men. I also observed a system that seemed entirely contradictory; whilst the Home Office made claims that its practices were intended to ascertain the veracity of claims, the methods seemed to bear no relation to such an aim. Indeed, Home Office practices seemed highly arbitrary, unscientific, and unable to withstand even the most superficial interrogation.

Dispersal and Legal Representation

The complexity of the asylum process for young men necessitated good quality legal representation; access to which has been severely curtailed in recent years (Burridge and Gill, 2017). The National Transfer scheme involved all local authorities in England[21] resulting, ultimately, in the dispersal of some young people to areas of the UK without asylum-specialist legal representation. Difficulties for UASCs in accessing specialist legal representation are reported across multiple local authorities: a report of the Independent Chief Inspector or Borders and Immigration (2017) stated waiting times of 2-3 months in East England, for example. Such delays were found to frustrate the progress of asylum claims to the detriment of the child's mental health with one charity referring to children as being in a 'legal limbo situation' (ibid., p.42). This situation was compounded at times due to a lack of interpreters in some regions (ibid.).

The effects of the dispersal policy need to be understood in light of recent changes to the availability of financial assistance for legal representation, known in the UK as legal aid. A series of cuts to legal aid between 2004 and 2014 brought substantial changes to access to legal advice for asylum and immigration cases (Singh and Webber, 2010; Burridge and Gill, 2017). In particular, changes were brought into effect by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) (HM Government, 2012a). This excluded access to legal aid for some cases, including in family, employment and welfare benefits law (Organ and Sigafoos, 2018). While legal aid remained available, although restricted, for asylum cases, other immigration procedures were broadly no longer eligible[22]. However, the exclusion of non-asylum cases from legal aid had a negative impact on access to legal representation for asylum cases (Wilding, 2017a). According to Alexandra Parry, an asylum barrister and academic, many legal firms that had previously offered asylum advice alongside other immigration advice were unable to continue to do so, as the income from legal aid asylum was insufficient:

[21] The Transfer Scheme was later extended to the devolved regions of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales; this came into force on 7th February 2018 (Home Office, 2018c)
[22] (For further information regarding the exclusion of immigration cases from legal aid, including exceptions to this exclusion, see Harvey, 2015)

the broad thing is, some providers just stopped doing it because they can't make ends meet just on asylum. So there are places where there is no asylum advice

(Interview with Alexandra Parry, 10/17)

The effects of LASPO on asylum legal provision have impacted asylum seekers across the board. Burridge and Gill (2017) describe legal aid cuts having 'resulted in the formation of legal deserts and uneven geographies of access to advice and legal representation' with asylum-seekers 'particularly those subject to no-choice dispersal throughout the UK for housing, ...enduring the impact of these cuts directly' (Burridge and Gill, 2017, p.23). This meant, for example, that Rothport's providers were in demand from areas around the city that lacked suitable legal firms of their own. A combination of the effects of LASPO, earlier cuts to legal aid provision, and the dispersal of UASCs created a system whereby UASCs in large areas of the country were without suitable legal advice. Alexandra Parry, a participant in my research, had been mapping this nationally:

The whole of Cornwall, all of Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, no advice. There is one provider for West and East Sussex and Surrey. There is nothing in Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, East Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumbria, Northumberland… no legal advice at all. And then you come down and you've got parts of Derbyshire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, parts of Warwickshire. So you've got the island of it in Birmingham and Staffordshire and then Nottinghamshire and Leicester, which has got lots. And then a tiny bit for Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire… So it was really sort of islands where they have got advice. And big swathes of the country which haven't.

(Interview with Alexandra, 10/17)

In addition to this, some young men were denied legal aid at appeal stage, having failed what is known as the 'merits test' (this assesses the strength of the case). Guidance from Coram Children's Legal Centre, whose training I attended in Rothport, states that UASCs should not normally be refused legal aid at the appeals stage:

Legal aid is available for asylum appeals… the merits test at appeal stage is much more stringent than for the initial application stage, but unaccompanied asylum-seeking children will almost always meet the criteria

(CCLC, 2017b, p.13)

Three of the young men I knew, Hama, Zoran and Mustafa, were refused legal aid at the appeal stage, having failed the merits test. Alexandra Parry explained that such tests were

incredibly subjective and, since the implementation of LASPO in 2013, there has been research suggesting a disincentive for legal representatives to appeal against an asylum refusal where UASC leave has been granted (Matthews, 2014). Restrictions and exclusions on the provision of legal aid as well as the regulation and monitoring of law firms by the Legal Aid Agency mean that UASCs may not necessarily receive the best advice, and provision is variable. During our conversation, Alexandra Parry explained:

> *There are a lot of solicitors out there that do the bare minimum of work and they have a ceiling. For unaccompanied children they are paid an hourly rate up to a ceiling of £800. So it is a more favourable payment than on a fixed fee for adults, but there is this ceiling and then they have to apply for an extension if they want to go above that and some firms just don't go above that that ceiling… It will take too long to apply, we will get audited on it, let's just stick within the fixed fee… Take what we know we can get paid for...*
>
> (Interview with Alexandra, 10/17)

Research from the Office of the Children's Commissioner has found that the £800 limit for legal advice is insufficient to prepare even the most straightforward of asylum cases (Matthews, 2014). This is compounded by the young person's pre-flight experiences, often including high levels of violence and disruption, which necessarily impacts one's capacity to communicate and articulate the necessary information promptly.

Rothport had been receiving adult asylum-seekers through the dispersal programme for some years and had established law firms specialising in asylum. It was common knowledge amongst the third sector agencies that certain law firms offered better provision than others. Rothport Accommodation Providers (RAP), which worked with destitute adults whose claims for asylum had been rejected by the Home Office, for instance, tended to use a law firm in a neighbouring city, about 40 minutes' drive, as they had found one solicitor in particular who was prepared to 'go the extra mile' even for complex and difficult cases that other law firms would not take on. Wissam, a support worker at YPHS, also communicated his frustration with the variability in the quality of legal representation:

> *There's been a lot of frustration with legal advice that we've got. We found some solicitors were ... in comparison with other solicitors they were in depth, they were going through the whole scenario with that young person and we found some solicitors do not do that so it's quite confusing… The good ones are really hard to book and there's a few, even the young people are like 'I don't like this person. They're not doing everything they can for me', and it was evident because that person failed their immigration assessment. So*

they've had to appeal it. Where the other ones are really good and they've all got their leave to remain.

(Interview with Lucy and Wissam, 7/17)

In particular, Wissam found that the good solicitors were those who would take the time to go over the young man's story and to clarify inconsistencies even before they got to the substantive interview. Whilst this was difficult for the young man to go through, it increased their chances of success of a favourable asylum decision:

Some solicitors … it was like interrogation, like that bit 'Hang on, you were in this place but how can you be in this place?' so I was really worried about some clients that this hasn't been done so you're just going to go to the Home Office unprepared and you're just going to blab… I feel that's the solicitor's job. If the dates are not matching up you need to tell them.

(Interview with Lucy and Wissam, 7/17)

Access to high quality legal representation is pivotal to securing leave to remain, without which a young person seeking asylum is left in a form of legal no-man's land, vulnerable to detention or removal once they have turned 18. Such access is largely a matter of luck; one's geographic location, waiting times at solicitors, whether one passes the merits test for access to legal aid, which solicitor is prepared to work 'above and beyond' for one's case, these are all outside of a young person's control. In Rothport, whilst there were legal firms with good reputations, these firms were in high demand and were responding to needs of people in 'legal aid deserts' beyond the city (Burridge and Gill, 2017).

My notes on the experience of Hama illustrate the demand on legal services in Rothport:

Hama's case for asylum was initially refused on the grounds that his story was inconsistent. At a YPHS team meeting in July 2017, I was told that Hama had also been denied legal aid on the grounds that his solicitors felt he did not have the required 45% chance of success. It was decided to move Hama to a different solicitor, but, as there was no availability in Rothport, an alternative was found in a neighbouring city one hour's drive away. In preparing his case for appeal, Hama was asked by the solicitor to find evidence that would prove his story. Hama's neighbour in Kurdistan had shown him a photo in a newspaper of Hama's father hanged by Iranian authorities; it was this that had prompted Hama to leave Kurdistan and travel across Europe. Hama was tasked with contacting this neighbour to get a copy of the newspaper report and photo. The effects on Hama were visible. He continued fasting well after Eid in order to secure a positive outcome at the appeal and his end of term exam was also negatively impacted.

> *Some months later, Hama was granted leave to remain at appeal. He had secured written testimonies from local youth workers, from college staff, even from his local gym. He had also in this time taken part in Rothport's half marathon and raised funds for Rothport Youth Works. Wissam, who attended Hama's appeal, was convinced that Hama's display of good character had helped secure a positive result.*

Hama's experiences illustrate the difficulties for some of the young men seeking to find and maintain legal representation. They give some indication of the logistical and emotional strain for the young men in meeting the burden of proof, pointing to a system of asylum processing that is far from child centred.

Findings from fieldwork echo existing literature in demonstrating the difficulties for the young men in accessing specialist legal representation due to a combination of the National Transfer Scheme and substantial cuts and restrictions to legal aid. In addition, the quality of representation has been inconsistent.

Expertise and Analyses

As Carver (2019) states:

> *At the centre of any decision to grant or refuse asylum lies an assessment of the applicant's 'credibility', which is to say an investigation into, and judgement of, the truthfulness of the account given by the individual vis-à-vis the Home Office chronicle of the conditions in her country of nationality.*
>
> (Carver, 2019, p.9)

My findings demonstrate the preponderance of a series of assessments and analyses employed by the Home Office in determination of a young person's 'credibility'. These include Country of Origin Information (COI) and Guidance, assessments of religious belief, Language Analysis for Determining Origin (LADO) and Age Assessment.

Assessments of Religious Belief

During the fieldwork months I spent time with Abraham, who was claiming asylum on the grounds of religious persecution. Many asylum seekers claiming a Christian faith are subjected to extensive testing of what has been termed 'Bible trivia' (Meral and Gray, 2016, p.4). As a strategy for verifying personal religious belief, this form of assessment is particularly problematic:

> *While the law is clear that religious persecution constitutes grounds for asylum, assessment of religious-based asylum applications is complex and challenging due to the inherently internal and personal nature of religion and belief* (Meral and Gray, 2016, p.3)

From conversing with Abraham, and from my friendships with other asylum seekers who had converted to Christianity, I gathered that the Home Office a demanded a 'performance' of Christian belief within parameters set by themselves. This performance is something I discussed with lawyer and researcher Antoinette Fulmer. From her own practice and research, Antoinette spoke of the way in which:

> *people go away and learn stuff… you get people who are from a particular area… or a particular clan and they go for their first interview and... the Home Office asks them lots of questions that they can't answer …. so they basically go away and learn to become what they are already. That's not to say that they're not but they've learnt how to articulate and sometimes they end up learning quite a lot about who they are or where they come from.*
>
> (Interview with Antoinette Fulmer, 10/17)

Antoinette Fulmer drew parallels between the religious assessment to which Abraham was subjected and the British Citizenship test. I told her I had attempted this test through an online version that appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper. Antoinette replied:

> *That's my point. If that's a test of how British are you and most people fail it, it doesn't stop us being British*
>
> (Interview with Antoinette Fulmer, 10/17)

In such a case, she continued, those attempting the British citizenship test are required to learn, from memory, the required answers:

> *You kind of become… a more particular version of Britishness just through going through that process. So when we are making citizens now, when we're naturalizing, we're making them into particular kinds of Britishness by saying these are the things that are important to being a British citizen… it's an ideal citizenship*
>
> (Interview with Antoinette, 10/17)

Drawing upon my journal notes and conversations with Abraham and others I share this account of Abraham's experience of claiming asylum. 'Michael' is Abraham's support worker at YPHS;

> *There were delays with the Home Office decision on Abraham's asylum application and Michael reported in a YPHS team meeting in July 2017 that Abraham's mental health was deteriorating as a consequence. In August 2017, Abraham attended the Home Office for an interview so that they could determine the credibility of his conversion to Pentecostal Christianity.*

I was aware of Home Office interview to determine the credibility of religious conversions prior to meeting Abraham. At this time, I was living in a community house in Rothport that hosted destitute asylum-seekers, many of whom had converted to Christianity. These Home Office interviews consisted of several hours of closed questioning[23] whereby the asylum applicant was expected to recount the catechism of the Christian religion. I knew of two churches offering 'baptism classes' to asylum-seekers converting from Islam to Christianity, which provided much of this knowledge required by the Home Office (for those who were able to learn by rote).

When Abraham was preparing for his interview, Michael said to me:

> *… if you were told leaving Eritrea that if you're a Pentecostal Christian you'll definitely get it it's quite tempting to say you're a Pentecostal Christian… But the actual Home Office test is very strict on that and you have to know your Bible inside out.*
>
> (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

I spoke with Abraham following his interview with the Home Office; he told me he had really enjoyed it and that it was his favourite topic to talk about; 'they ask me 100 questions!', he said. Talking later at YPHS, Michael was less certain that it had gone well. He said Abraham had come out 'cocky' but had actually performed badly on a later question regarding his favourite parable. Abraham had answered something generic like 'I like the bit about Jesus coming back from the dead'.

Despite Michael's concerns around the success of Abraham's 'test of Christianity', Abraham was eventually awarded leave to remain in October 2017.

Since his arrival in Rothport, Abraham had frequented a Pentecostal church regularly. He had been introduced to this church by another Eritrean Pentecostal, Semere, who had arrived in Rothport some months before him. In addition to this, Abraham and I had spoken many times about his faith, about his desire for me to believe as he did, and about his understanding of what is right and wrong in terms of sexuality and relationships. There was, therefore, plenty of rich material that could be used to evidence Abraham's claim. Yet this was not immediately relevant for his asylum claim, where his faith and practice were

[23] By this I meant questions demanding a short answer from a limited set of responses, normally a 'yes' or 'no'.

reduced to his capacity to recite what the decision-maker has determined are relevant key facts.

Similarly, Abraham had to learn to present as an 'ideal Christian'; he had to learn to become that which he already was, but in a form acceptable to the Home Office. The expectation of 'fit' demonstrated by the Home Office is evident in assessment of religious belief and is also found in Home Office practices used to determine country of origin through linguistic analysis, known as LADO (Linguistic Analysis for Determining Origin).

Country of Origin Information (COI) and Guidance

In determining an asylum claim, Home Office decision-makers rely largely on Country of Origin Information (COI) reports. Schuster (2018) describes COI reports as 'desk-based compilations of second- and often third- or fourth-hand information gleaned from other reports' from UN bodies such as UNHCR, NGOs including Amnesty International, pooled information from governmental fact-finding missions, newspaper reports and interviews with experts (p.4). COI reports based on references to other reports evidently run the constant risk of obsolescence and the use of experts can be problematic, as Schuster (ibid.) notes:

> *… in many cases, the 'experts' have no knowledge of local languages, have spent very short periods in country without spending time in the community, but instead are obliged by security protocols to live in gated and usually armed compounds, often travelling in armoured vehicles and with bodyguards.* (p.4)

From my field observations, Home Office use of COI reports was particularly problematic in cases relating to Afghanistan. Schuster's research found asylum applications were refused due to out of date reports and the cherry-picking of information in order to undermine a claimant's credibility (Schuster, 2018). Home Office decision-makers will refer to COI reports and Country Guidance (CG) cases[24] that provide counsel, amongst other things, on the possibility of internal relocation for those returned to their country of origin. Since 2007, 2,018 former UASCs have been forcibly returned to Afghanistan (Gladwell et al., 2016). Having spent years in the UK care system, these 'Westernised' men are frequently the targets of violence upon return, find previous familial networks disrupted, are unable to secure work and experience severe physical and mental health difficulties (Gladwell et al., 2016). Schuster (2018) reports the refusal of asylum to one Afghan young man on the grounds that, having already 'demonstrated considerable personal fortitude in relocating to a country where you do not have any ties or speak the language and attempting to establish a life here', he should therefore find little difficulty in returning and integrating into Afghan

[24] CG cases are those 'decided by the Upper Tribunal' where 'that decision contains an assessment of facts in a particular country that decision-makers ought to be aware of because it is likely to be of assistance in other cases from that country' (Schuster, 2018, p.9)

society (p.1375). Such a view neglects the significance of an extensive state system in the UK, including foster care, formal schooling and financial support; life in Afghanistan relies instead on social networks to access shelter and basic services (Schuster, 2018).

The reliability of COI guidance is also called into question with reference to intended returns to Eritrea. In 2015, the Home Office changed its country guidance for Eritrea stating it was now safe for Eritreans who had fled the country to return; that they would not be subject to persecution upon return due to leaving the country illegally (Lyons, 2016). This guidance was based on a report written for the Danish government, which was largely discredited and led to the resignation of the two researchers involved, who claimed the report misrepresented their findings (Lyons, 2015). Alexandra Parry described this report as:

> *a really dodgy report from Denmark, which the authors already disowned before the Home Office started using it. It was an astonishing waste of money...*
>
> (Interview with Alexandra Parry, 10/17)

As a result, 86% of those who were refused asylum under COI guidance on Eritrea had their refusal overturned at appeal (Kibreab, 2017).

Claims for asylum are accepted or refused based on, amongst other evidence, COI guidance, which is often outdated, mis-applied or simply false. Those young people who are refused the right of appeal may then experience a protracted period of uncertainty and fear. In other cases, it has led to the return of former looked-after children to situations of isolation, minimal social support and violence (e.g. Alpes et al., 2017; Asylos, 2017).

During the fieldwork, I came across an Afghan man, Musadeq, who was detained following his 18th birthday. He had been granted UASC leave, which had expired and, without leave to remain, he was subject to removal. I managed to secure the support of the local MP, James Costa, whose team were instrumental in securing Musadeq's release and return to Rothport. However, his solicitor had cautioned that it was not the end of the road for him; there was still a potentially long legal process before he could be exempt from further removal attempts on the part of the Home Office.

As I observed, young men from Afghanistan were particularly at risk of refusals of leave to remain and, subsequently, liable to attempts of removal once they reached adulthood. This was in part due to the extant COI guidance for Afghanistan but equally due to the feasibility, rather than the safety, of return[25].

[25] In 2016, the EU signed an agreement with the government of Afghanistan, allowing EU member states to deport unlimited numbers of Afghan asylum-seekers and obliging the Afghan government to receive them. A leaked memo suggested that Afghanistan would have aid from the EU removed if it failed to cooperate (Rasmussen, 2016)

Linguistic Analysis for Determining Origin (LADO)

In 2001, The Home Office introduced the practice of LADO on the assumption that the nationality of an asylum seeker could be determined and verified by a native speaker[26] of the shared language (Home Office, 2018b; Carver, 2019). For example, an asylum seeker claiming to be from Syria, would be assessed by an Arabic-speaker, who would be able to verify the claim. This process takes place as an additional interview via a loud speaker over the telephone with 'an analyst from a private company in Sweden' (Carver, 2019, p.11).

The Home Office states that the phenomenon of language analysis consists of:

> *language experts talking and listening to individuals speak in their own language and dialect, analysing significant features in the speech, and producing written, reasoned conclusions as to their place of linguistic origin.*
>
> (Home Office, 2018b, p.6)

These conclusions:

> *… are valuable in helping to confirm individuals' places of origin and to detect fraud. LA is therefore important in helping to maintain a firm but fair system that grants protection and/or leave to those who need it, or qualify for it, and which tackles abuse and protects public funds by quickly rejecting unfounded claims.*
>
> (Home Office, 2018b, p.6)

.

I discussed the phenomenon of LADO with Alexandra Parry

Alexandra stated:

> *… those language assessments are really dodgy as well. I mean, the Home Office send... for them. Usually they are done over the phone and often they are done by somebody who hasn't been in that country for quite a long time.*
>
> (Interview: Alexandra, 10/17)

Such analysis, Alexandra felt, failed to account for the histories of the people she had represented, as barrister, and the effects this would necessarily have on their use of language. She described a particularly memorable case of hers involving a young man from Eritrea. The young man was born in Eritrea but had been living in Ethiopia for most of his childhood when, as many were at that time, he was deported back to Eritrea; this was his first time in Eritrea since early infancy. His first language was Amharic, and he had later

[26] The idea of 'native speaker' has been problematized in linguistics (Beinhoff, 2013) and described as a 'hypothetical ideal rather than a definable group of people' (Carver, 2019, p.11)

acquired some Tigrinya. Over the next few years, he travelled overland to the UK, with multiple different nationalities and languages around him. Consequently, several years after he had been in the UK, when the Home Office subjected the young man to LADO, his claim to asylum was refused on the basis that his use of language was inconsistent with being Eritrean. The practice of LADO, Alexandra argued, failed to take into account histories of multiple displacements, of the bleeding of languages across permeable borders.

Language Analysis for Determining Origin (LADO) is studied in the work of Noé Kam, who calls into question the adequacy of LADO when used in isolation (Kam, 2014). Kam argues that:

> *…many Western adjudicators still believe that language is a fundamental mirror of an applicant's identity, as an individual speaks the language of the social group into which he is socialized.* (Kam, 2014, p.58)

Kam's work, and the work of others (e.g. Erard, 2003) offer criticism of LADO in the strongest terms. LADO results cannot be replicated from one expert to the next, despite following identical linguistic techniques (Kam, 2014). Kam concludes:

> *Indeed, a wholly unscientific and unscholarly method is revealed whereby conclusions appear based primarily on the linguist's feelings and the native speaker's intuition.* (Kam, 2014, p.58)

LADO, it would seem, is an instrument of negligible validity; it cannot, with any degree of certainty, determine an individual's nationality. Yet conclusions from LADO are used by the Home Office as grounds for the refusal of asylum. This may be because the asylum seeker is determined to be from a country where, according to COI documentation, he would not be at risk of persecution or, as in Zoran's case, the conclusion reached through LADO was different to Zoran's testimony, and as such, he was judged to be a liar and lacking in credibility.

Yet the phenomenon of LADO should be understood more comprehensively as an indicator of Home Office culture that speaks profoundly of, as Carver (2019) states, a 'colonial anxiety at the border'. Carver (ibid.) observes:

> *The belief that the world consists of discrete and bounded nation-states to which every individual body has a designated attachment remains at the heart of political and legal understandings of migration.* (p.154)

The categorization of movers, 'those who are permitted entry and under what conditions' (ibid., p.154), serves not only to reproduce the nation, but to reproduce a global system of nation-states. For many at the border crossing, entry is smooth: often a mere swipe of the passport (ibid.). Others may be determined ineligible to cross borders within this system

(ibid.). As states attempt to label and control such people, they are 'bringing them into the system' of nation-states. Carver (ibid.) argues that this is a continuation of a colonial practice of 'making up people' (Hacking, 1999):

> *As with colonial-era physical anthropology, the methods used to determine identity- linguistic analysis and DNA-testing- situate that identity in the body.*
>
> (Carver, 2019, pp.154-155)

The Somali, or Kurdish, or Eritrean migrant, for example, is determined as an unreliable informant of his own identity (ibid.). Instead, the 'scientific' tools of the 'enlightened West' are employed to 'discover' his identity (ibid., p.155). LADO is one such tool and is premised on the assumption that:

> … *the way a person speaks is intimately related to their place of origin, hence- by a leap of logic about which linguistics has nothing to say- their citizenship.*
>
> (Patrick, 2012, 38.4)

The practice of LADO is, therefore, about determining 'which bodies belong to which bordered nation-state' (Carver, 2019, p.12).

Over the course of the fieldwork, I got to know Zoran, a young man from Kurdistan. The story of his application for asylum follows:

> *Zoran arrived in Broomshire at the end of 2016. I met him at the beginning of 2017, by which time he had claimed asylum. Zoran waited several months for a decision on his application; in September 2017, the Home Office required Zoran to undergo LADO in order to determine the veracity of his claim that he was from Iran rather than Iraq. His support worker from YPHS, Michael, drove Zoran to a Home Office regional office for this assessment to take place. Michael later emailed me, saying that although he had gone to great lengths to help Zoran understand what was happening, half-way down the motorway Zoran had turned to Michael enquiring where they were going and why. 'He didn't have a clue', Michael said.*
>
> *The results from Zoran's language assessment determined that he was from Iraq not Iran. Due to this, Zoran was denied leave to remain based on a lack of credibility. In addition, Zoran was refused legal aid for appeal on the grounds that his case did not have a sufficient chance of success. Broomshire local authority agreed to pay the legal costs for Zoran's appeal on condition that he remain in or around the Rothport area.*

> *Zoran was eventually unsuccessful at appeal. To my understanding, he remains in the UK, away from Rothport and has yet to acquire leave to remain.*

Zoran's story illustrates a number of the complexities of language determination identified above. Zoran identified as Kurdish and came from Kurdistan, where there is considerable fluidity between the Iran-Iraq border for Kurds. He specified Iran as his country of origin as something of an administrative detail. The conclusions of LADO for Zoran were grounds for the refusal of asylum. Zoran was insufficiently trustworthy to define himself- either as Kurdish or, as a matter of political expedience, as Iranian.

Age Determination

Age assessments are required by the Home Office where the following criteria are met in full:

> • *their claimed age is doubted by the Home Office*
>
> • *they claim to be a child but are suspected to be an adult or they claim to be an adult but are suspected to be a child*
>
> • *there is little or no reliable supporting evidence of the claimed age*

(Home Office, 2018a, p.7)

Age disputes tend to occur at the screening stage of the asylum process where the Home Office doubts the claim and 'there is no reliable documentary evidence to support their claimed age' (Home Office, 2018a, p.5). Home Office guidance is as follows:

> *You must treat the claimant as an adult if their physical appearance and demeanour* ***very strongly suggests that they are 25 years of age or over****… If your assessment determines that the claimant's physical appearance and demeanour very strongly suggests that they are 25 years of age or over, you must refer the case to another officer to act as a 'second pair of eyes'.*

(Home Office, 2018a, p.12-13, emphasis in original)

In some cases, age assessments are made by social workers within local authorities. Statutory guidance in this area stipulates that age assessments:

> *should only be carried out where there is significant reason to doubt that the claimant is a child. Age assessments should not be a routine part of a local authority's assessment of unaccompanied or trafficked children.*

(Department for Education, 2017a)

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) issued guidance in 2015 intending to 'address the gap there has been in national guidance on this topic' (ADCS, 2015, p.3). Whereas the assessment conducted at the screening stage relies strongly on a rather limited judgement of physical appearance, age assessments made by social workers are intended to be more holistic, with efforts in recent years to move towards a purely psychosocial model of assessment (Busler, 2016). This model offers advantages over medical and dental assessments, which have drawn criticisms based on ethical concerns and sizeable margins of error (Busler, 2016). Psychosocial assessments involve:

> *interviews with and observations of the young people (with contributions by any other professionals working with them), exploring their lives (physical, emotional, familial, educational and beyond) particularly in relation to their social environment, both current and past.*
>
> (Busler, 2016, p.87)

The move towards a solely psycho-social process has yet to become embedded across the UK, which has hitherto witnessed poor practice in age assessments, resulting often in legal challenges (Busler, 2016). In addition to this, no age assessment process, including that based on psychosocial principles, can ascertain an age with any degree of certainty and margins of error continue with 2 to 3 years either side of a determined age (Busler, 2016).

The training that I attended training with the Coram Children's Legal Centre focused partly on age determination processes in the Home Office. Extracts of Home Office decisions feature in the following text, demonstrating a deeply flawed and inconsistent approach. Here is one example:

> *A does not present as a minor in both his demeanour and physical appearance. Both assessors believe he is over the age of 18 due to his adult persona and developed features in both his face and body. A appeared confident with the assessment process and answered the questions which were put to him although he appeared disinterested in the process. There was nothing to consider in the assessment to give A the benefit of the doubt as a young person below the age of 18.*
>
> (Training materials from CCLC, 10/17)

In this case, it is notable that it is A's appearance and 'developed features' that have informed both assessors. Furthermore, A's apparent confidence is treated as an indication of biological maturity. A further example follows:

> *T's account was inconsistent and the detail he provided throughout the assessment varied. He was very hesitant when answering questions, particularly regarding his age when at school.*
>
> (Training materials from CCLC, 10/17)

In this example, along with T's perceived inconsistencies, it is his hesitancy and lack of confidence that lead to a determination of adulthood. In other cases, the judgement of the Home Office officials appears to be informed by rather arbitrary interpretations of the young person's competence:

> *M informed us that he was not able to cook meals for himself. M eats out all the time. It is felt that M has displayed that he has the ability to budget his own finances, and looking after his own physical needs.*
>
> (Training materials from CCLC, 10/17)

These extracts demonstrate a set of expectations of child-like appearance and behaviour that are Western-centric. The assumptions of a 'universal childhood', which underpins the treatment of young people in the asylum system, has been and continues to be extensively challenged on multiple grounds (e.g. Nieuwenhuys, 1998; Aitken, 2001; Prout, 2005; Crawley, 2007, 2010, 2011; Silverman, 2016; McLaughlin, 2018). The extracts above demonstrate the continuing power of Western representations of childhood coupled with cultures of disbelief that are endemic to the system (Jubani, 2011; McLaughlin, 2018). These trends are further demonstrated in the following extracts, which refer to the same individual:

> *His demeanour was that of a nervous person who appeared worried about the assessment process. Throughout the assessment X appeared shy and uncomfortable. He sat still and quietly mainly facing towards the interpreter and presented as somewhat subservient to the assessors. This was partly taken as a natural reaction to being questioned and therefore no particular weight was given it. The only concern, in this respect, held by the assessors was that his shyness and apparent uncomfortable disposition may have been due to his being an adult attempting to hide his physical appearance and project an image of a young person*
>
> (Training materials from CCLC, 10/17)

And the second assessment reads:

> *In this assessment his demeanour was calm and confident throughout the duration of the assessment period. He sat quietly and in a relaxed manner, with very little sign of nerves or tension. It is the assessor's view that confidence was giving us the impression of someone older than his stated*

age of 14. We believe that his quiet and calm demeanour was due to S controlling his behaviour to avoid presenting as over the age of 14. We also note the observations of the social workers who have stated that in the past he has been very demanding and can be exceptionally rude. Although since the time he spent in Liverpool his behaviour has modified and he is appreciative of the support he receives. Assessors considered that S has now been associating with other teenagers in the unit on a regular basis and there may be some scope to learn behaviours to appear younger

(Training materials from CCLC, 10/17)

The young man in question appears to be in an impossible position. At first, his lack of confidence is taken as indicative of an attempt on his part to mislead his assessors. Later, S's behaviour that appears child-like is taken to be learnt behaviour, again in an attempt to mislead. From these extracts, one could conclude that there are few interpretations available for assessors: either the young person appears child-like, in which case it is a false presentation, or the young person appears with a confidence and calm that betray his true maturity. In both cases there is an underlying assumption that the young man is lying.

Here, I offer Mustafa's story. Mustafa was initially assessed as an adult, although he was successful in challenging this determination and was recognised by the Home Office and local authority as aged 17 at the time he first claimed asylum.

Mustafa arrived in the UK aged 17, having travelled overland from Afghanistan. He arrived without papers and was determined by the Home Office to be an adult. Mustafa was able to contest the age determination and was placed in local authority care in Broomshire. Mustafa waited several months for Home Office confirmation of his 'new' age of 17½, which caused delays in filing an asylum claim and consequently accessing college. The delay in receiving Mustafa's Asylum Registration Card (ARC) also impacted his accessing CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services).

For several months, Mustafa demonstrated serious distress whilst going through the asylum process. He was losing weight and, whereas previously he may have at least eaten a biscuit for lunch, he was now refusing food altogether. In March 2017, I received an email from his support worker at YPHS, Lucy, stating: 'I had a chat with Mustafa today at RRS with an interpreter. Seems he is very worried about Tuesday (Home Office) and that is potentially a big part of him not eating'.

In October 2017, the Home Office refused Mustafa's application for asylum. I saw Mustafa at Westford Leisure Centre shortly after this. He looked at me

and said 'Fucking Home Office' then left. Mustafa's solicitor lodged an appeal, and, as Mustafa was denied legal aid, Broomshire local authority agreed to pay legal costs. In December 2017, I left the UK for some months. Upon my return, Michael informed me that they were still awaiting a decision on the appeal and that Mustafa's mental health had significantly deteriorated.

Mustafa story is illustrative of a number of impacts of the UK asylum system upon unaccompanied minors. Because Mustafa was able to contest this determination and to, eventually, be acknowledged by the Home Office as a child, he received significantly greater care and support than he would have as an adult. When Mustafa was refused legal aid after his asylum refusal, the local authority agreed to pay the legal costs for an appeal. In the meantime, Mustafa was accommodated by the local authority, continued to access college, had a social worker and a support worker from YPHS, as well as a regular allowance and a bus pass, with which he could continue to meet friends and socialise a bit.

His story alludes to the issue of representational practices of children who seek asylum and the prevalence of age assessment as a tool of adjudication, which is deeply problematic. In part, this relates to Crawley's earlier work on age assessment of asylum-seeking children (2007); Crawley's research found evidence that 'much of what currently passes for 'age assessment', particularly at screening units and ports but also among some social workers, legal representatives, immigration judges and other practitioners, is essentially a rapid visual assessment which concludes that an individual *doesn't look like a child.*' (Crawley, 2007, p.49 italics in original). Mustafa was assessed as an adult at the screening unit by Home Office officials; at this point, the assessment lacks the holistic, psychosocial aspirations of local authority assessments by social workers. Yet whilst local authority age assessments may offer a more extensive and informed set of observations leading to an age determination, they fail to resolve the charge of Western-centric expectations of childhood. Home Office officials are asked to decide whether or not the young person in question looks like a child. Social workers, informed by other professional opinions, are asked to decide whether or not the young person in question behaves, over a period of time, like a child. In both cases, the point of reference is one which is historically, ideologically and culturally bound to context. (Cemlyn and Nye, 2012)

SUMMARY

This chapter has described and critically analysed the system of seeking asylum for young people who arrive in the UK unaccompanied. Young people recognised as under 18 have some entitlements that mitigate against the full harshness of the asylum system. Most young men I knew in this situation were allocated a social worker and a support worker and often the local authority provided funding for legal representation when the threshold for

legal aid was missed. Yet the acquisition of leave to remain is frustrated for unaccompanied children due to a failure, on the part of the Home Office, to recognise experiences of childhood that are incongruous with Western ideal types and due to cultures of disbelief that permeate the asylum process.

For adults and children alike, the preoccupation with Home Office officials to 'fix', 'identify' and 'legitimate' those who have crossed into the UK irregularly may be linked to a wider 'colonial anxiety' (Carver, 2019); that is, a required translation and determination of a person's identity according to the 'expertise' of former colonial powers (ibid.). The plethora of analyses and (mis)uses of (Western) expertise are tools in this desire to 'fix' the migrant within the discrete, bounded and hierarchical topography of nation-states. To be recognised as a refugee, the young, unaccompanied asylum seekers with whom I spent time were required to provide narratives that would fit into a particular template whilst somehow remaining congruent with expected childhood experiences. This process was far from easy for any of the young men and deeply distressing for many. For a few, the failure to acquire leave to remain beyond aged 17 ½ will have huge repercussions in their lives. As I observed, going through the asylum system was hugely stressful for the young men and deleterious to their mental health and wellbeing. I knew of one young man who continued faster long after *Ramadan* has finished, hoping that this might produce a favourable outcome for him. I knew of others who became withdrawn and isolated themselves from their peers, or who developed painful physical symptoms as a result of the stress of waiting for an asylum decision. For the most part, the asylum system was hostile and debilitating.

In the next chapter, I move away from the asylum system and focus on the domains of formal education, housing and children's services. I present findings relating to the young men's experiences in these domains, arguing that they form structures that are simultaneously caring and constraining.

CHAPTER 7: STRUCTURES OF CARE AND CONTROL

INTRODUCTION

Recognition of children's agency entails acknowledgement that they should 'have a say in important decisions that affect them' (Valentine, 2011, p.354). At the same time, dominant social constructions of childhood position children as inherently vulnerable and thus in need of protection (Giner, 2007). At times, these two positions may be seen to be in tension with one another:

> *On the one hand, the child is seen as an individual with the right to respect for his own opinions, while at the same time she is considered as vulnerable and in need of adult protection and care.* (Lidén and Rusten, 2007, p.278)

Protection can entail control over a child and their removal from a position of risk, (James, 2011). Thus, the imperative to protect can impose limitations on a young person's movement and can prohibit certain relationships and activities. Unaccompanied minors are placed in local authority care and operate within a structure developed to meet the needs of looked-after children, where there is a mandate on the part of the corporate parenting team to protect young people from harm (Department of Health, 2018). In addition to this, unaccompanied minors who are yet to acquire leave to remain are subject to additional controls, such as prohibitions against paid work and opening bank accounts.

I choose the terms 'care' and 'control' to represent the ambivalence inherent in the system; whilst structures of care may support a young man or respond to their wants and needs, they can also have a limiting effect, such as prohibiting movement and relationships that are deemed by children's services to be detrimental to the young man's wellbeing. Furthermore, whilst a local authority will have responsibility for a young person, this may be withdrawn if certain criteria are not met, for example, residence within local authority boundaries. In this chapter, I employ material from my fieldwork in exploring the care and control of unaccompanied minors within the three domains of: children's services, accommodation and formal education. I consider each domain first from the perspectives of service providers and then from those of the young men themselves. Through this discussion I seek to provide understanding of the complex relationship between care and control as experienced on a quotidian basis. The material I have produced indicates a complex, often contradictory and fluid set of matrices of care and control around the young men. This material includes emails sent to and received from other professionals in the field, my journal notes, and the transcripts of semi-structured interviews conducted with relevant professionals and with the young men themselves. I preface the exploration of experience with a brief discussion of the concepts of care and control and their salience when

considering how the UK state, statutory and voluntary services deal with unaccompanied minors.

CARE, CONTROL AND UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

The concept of care is prevalent in literature relating to refugee and asylum-seeking children (e.g. Ressler et al., 1988; Ingleby and Watters, 2002; Hjern and Jeppsson, 2005; Newbigging and Thomas, 2011). Ingleby and Watters (2002, p.43) speak of helping children 'at risk' in terms of their physical and mental health and their all-round development' and suggest a 'preventative approach- to give children support and encouragement; to show them how to confront their problems themselves; and to help them feel they are not simply being abandoned to their fate' (ibid., p.43). Horgan and Ní Raghallaigh (2019, p.95), speak of unaccompanied minors as, 'a diverse group of young people who need individualised care' adding:

> *Care planning for them needs to take this diversity into account and needs to ensure that their resilience and agency are appropriately considered rather than primarily focusing on their vulnerability* (ibid., p.95).

The understandings of care for unaccompanied minors centre on a holistic meeting of a range of needs, which balances the young people's positions of vulnerability alongside their strength and agency. The field of social work offers a useful starting point when considering the relationship between care and control. It is in part through the field of social work that the state intervenes in individual and family life. Sales and Hek (2004) argue that this state intervention serves a dual function:

> *On the one hand, intervention has meant providing for the destitute and needy, or those deemed to be 'deserving' of help; on the other, intervention has also meant controlling the behaviour of the 'deviant' or attempting to reform the behaviour of the 'undeserving poor'.* (ibid., p.61)

Social work has, according to Sales and Hek (ibid., p.61), always been 'at the heart of these contradictory pressures' Humphries' (2004) analysis is similar, arguing:

> *social work has always been a tool for disciplining the poor as well as a profession genuinely concerned with their welfare.*
>
> (ibid., p.29)

Banks (2001, p.16) has understood control as 'enforcing societal norms' and care as 'expressing society's altruism'. I have selected and interpreted data for this chapter that reveal an understanding and a practice of care and control that share some commonalities

with Banks' (ibid.) description. The practice of caring involves the alleviation of suffering and discomfort of the person concerned as well as acts that are perceived as enabling or facilitating in some way. In this chapter, I detail the interpretations of care and, alongside this, practices of control of unaccompanied minors in Rothport. In some cases, acts of care and control are easy to distinguish. At face value, providing food to someone who is hungry is an act of care. Subjecting the same individual to immigration detention pending removal is clearly an act of control. Yet the relationship between the two concepts of care and control is rarely so dichotomous, just as the relationship between agency and vulnerability is not mutually exclusive. Practices of care can equally be practices of control depending on individual and institutional intentions and perspectives, depending on the social relationship between individuals, depending on relationships of power in specific contexts, and depending on the consequences, intended or otherwise.

The Prevent Agenda is a useful case in point. Department for Education (DfE) guidance stipulates that the Prevent Agenda is a duty to protect children from extremist radicalisation; it is an act of care (Department for Education, 2015). Critics of the Prevent Agenda, have focused, however, on such actions as the large-scale surveillance by the police and security services (Kundnani, 2009; Thomas, 2015) and the surveillance of Muslims in schools in particular (Miah, 2017). From that perspective, therefore, it is a programme of control.

Understandings of care and control, and the relationship between these two concepts, are important when considering statutory and voluntary service provision for unaccompanied minors but also when considering young men's agentive responses to this provision. A focus on the dynamic between care and control reveals a fluidity to the structures in which unaccompanied minors are enmeshed; whether these structures are perceived as caring or controlling by the young men changes with time and with shifts in context and circumstances. This is testimony to the heterogeneity of experiences of the young men and also the pace and variety of change that takes place as the young men build new lives and new relationships.

In this chapter, I explore how care and control are enacted and experienced in Rothport drawing upon my research with young men who may be seen as both agentive and vulnerable. As noted, discussion is organised in terms of the three domains of children's services, accommodation, and formal education.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

> *Being a corporate parent means doing everything we can for every child in the council's care- and every care leaver- to give them the opportunities that other children get. This covers everything from keeping an eye on their progress at school, to looking after their health and wellbeing, to preparing them for life as independent adults- and supporting*

them when they get there. We need to be ambitious for the children in our care, encouraging them to dream big and take chances even if they don't feel like that's been an option in the past.

(Local Government Association, 2017, p.2)

The quotation pertains to the most significant regulatory structure, after the asylum system, for the lives of unaccompanied minors. Asylum-seekers under 18, without a parent or customary caregiver, are brought within the system for looked-after children where the state performs as corporate parent. The system of corporate parenting is designed to compensate for the lack of biological or customary parents and to ensure, through extensive monitoring, safe progression to the destination of adulthood. It is a highly developmental model, rendering the state of childhood as natural and children as semi-competent. With looked-after children, the state, via the local authority, is forced to step in to fulfil parental obligations. It is the role of the child social worker to fulfil the local authority's obligations as corporate parent (Child Social Work Matters, 2018), through the oversight of a multi-agency approach including education and healthcare. During my fieldwork, the day-to-day support of this multi-agency approach in Broomshire was provided by a not-for-profit organisation referred to here as YPHS (Young People's Housing Services). In the discussion that follows I offer extracts from transcripts of interviews that took place between May and September 2017 with staff at YPHS Broomshire. Kathleen was the manager at the YPHS Broomshire office. Michael was the UASC Support Worker at YPHS Broomshire: a role that developed over the course of the fieldwork. Wissam and Lucy were both support workers at YPHS Broomshire.

Care and Control from Service Providers within Children's Services

I consider two key aspects of children's services role in caring and controlling. The first concerns the provision of care as a form of supported integration whereby staff at YPHS worked with the young men to help them familiarise themselves with the locality, to build routine, to access services and to work towards an independent future. The second concerns a formulation of care based on a relationship with the young men: a relationship predicated on constancy and everyday presence but also a heightened responsibility towards the young men, manifesting itself in increased surveillance and control at times.

I outline here the model of supported integration developed by YPHS. I then discuss the aspects of this model that illustrate the care dimension of this provision, before considering practices of control exemplified in this model.

YPHS Broomshire worked in partnership with Broomshire Children's Services; The social workers were expected to meet with the young man every six weeks and carried the statutory responsibility for developing their care package and ensuring their welfare. The

everyday support tasks were performed by the support workers at YPHS. Although new to providing support for unaccompanied minors, YPHS staff were accustomed to working with non-asylum-seeking young people. Unaccompanied minors were thus accommodated into an existing system, which was adapted in June 2017 to provide a UASC-specialist role. Existing support, prior to UASC-specialisation, had centred on assisting independent living and promoting engagement in positive relationships and activities, education, training and employment. Kathleen, manager at the YPHS Broomshire office, explained:

> *[we] worked with UASC young people through our hostels and stuff. But a specific project that looked at that intensive support and integration that oversaw the housing and were involved in the statutory obligation stuff was brand new. But it … slots in really well with the other work that we do…*
>
> (Interview: Kathleen, 9/17)

As YPHS adapted to providing support for unaccompanied minors alongside non-asylum-seeking young people, various additional tasks and duties on the part of support workers were introduced, in response to identified needs specific to this particular demographic. Over the first few months following the arrival of the first unaccompanied minor clients, YPHS developed a 'project schedule' in order to formalise and institutionalise the activities and tasks that were necessary to support the young men and to help them build independent lives. As Kathleen explained, the YPHS project working with unaccompanied minors was steered towards helping the young men establish a certain kind of independent future:

> *So that's what looks good for us. A sustained, secure home. The ability to build positive relationships whatever they may be. With whoever. And being engaged in some kind of meaningful activity that gives them a future*
>
> (Interview: Kathleen, 9/17)

The 'project schedule' was thus devised to ensure incremental steps were taken by the support workers and the young men to achieve this end. A summary of this schedule follows in Figure 21:

Jobs or Actions to be completed
Health ✓ Social Services to complete Health Assessment Referral Form to access NHS Primary Care ✓ YPHS to arrange Health Assessment at The Refuge Medical Centre and to take the young person to initial appointment and to follow up appointments ✓ Social Services to arrange Looked-After Child Health Assessment with interpreter present. YPHS to take to appointment. ✓ Register with doctor/ dentist/ optician
Legal Status and Asylum Claim ✓ YPHS to engage a solicitor and social services to provide paperwork for legal aid ✓ YPHS to take to appointments including initial assessment and completion of asylum form, attending Home Office, biometric profile and asylum appeal if applicable
Education ✓ YPHS to take to Rothport Refugee Solidarity (RRS) for ESOL assessment ✓ YPHS to take to RRS and Frontiers to register for ESOL classes and to attend with hereafter ✓ Enrol at Rothport City College for full-time ESOL course
Other ✓ Look at contact with family through Red Cross (RRS referral) ✓ YPHS to purchase smart phone and provide monthly phone top-up of £40 ✓ YPHS to provide with weekly allowance and monthly bus pass ✓ YPHS to take clothes shopping and provide winter clothing allowance ✓ Take food shopping and work towards shopping independently ✓ Work towards managing money independently ✓ Get to know local area ✓ Get to know Broomshire/Rothport ✓ Engage in using public transport ✓ Engagement in participation activities such as football and cooking ✓ Engagement in faith

Figure 21 Project Schedule of UASC Integration, adapted from fieldnotes 2/17

Care and Control in Supported Integration

The 'project schedule' in Figure 21 above illustrates certain configurations of care and control in the role of supporting unaccompanied minors. On one hand, the table shows YPHS providing care in meeting basic human needs: adequate clothing, food, somewhere to sleep, rest, wash and eat, and some healthcare provision. Kathleen referred to this as providing the foundations:

> *… when you look at trauma recovery models and stuff like that the basics is: get your accommodation, get them somewhere to live in order for them to feel safe. Make sure they've got food in their belly and they know how to do that. And then you build from there.* (Interview: Kathleen, 9/17)

From this point, we see aspects of the project schedule that, in Kathleen's words, build on this human-needs foundation, and that can be understood as incremental steps on the path to independence. These include, for example, taking the young men food shopping and working towards shopping independently, and also engaging in using public transport. The care here is reminiscent of models of development and socialisation whereby children learn, through their parents or other adults, the norms and skills of adult completion. The care is successful if, after a period of time, it is no longer necessary. In addition to helping the young men build independent lives through the acquisition of day-to-day skills such as cooking, part of the care on the part of YPHS was to help the young men access education, including informal provision at RCOs as well as college, and to assist integration into ESOL provision in the locality. Thus, part of building independence is concerned with being equipped to communicate and to be employable.

The 'project schedule' also maps out incremental steps whereby the young man is encouraged and facilitated to develop social networks in and around Rothport, facilitated with knowledge of public transport networks, local geography, a disposable income and knowledge of various activities on offer in and around Rothport. The project schedule details, for example, 'engagement in participation activities such as football and cooking', 'engagement in faith', and 'YPHS to take to RRS and Frontiers to register for ESOL classes and to attend hereafter'. Partly, these tasks are to assist the young men in engaging in activities and relationships that are considered 'healthy' and are sanctioned by youth and children's services. In addition, other activities centre around integration into existing refugee services in the area. The support workers from YPHS felt this was really important in enabling the young men to start to feel at home in Rothport. Michael reported:

> *Getting them to know there's a community of refugees and asylum seekers in Rothport has been really important… the first time they hear their own language… You see them and they go off… It amazes me with the number of them they've met*

people they know from Eritrea. So I took Semere to RRS for the first time and he met a friend of his brothers. (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

YPHS would register the young men with the Red Cross, who could begin to attempt to trace family members in countries of origin or elsewhere. In Chapter 3, I drew attention to literature concerning the importance of continuity for unaccompanied minors as they begin to form a sense of belonging in places of resettlement (Kohli, 2011). Part of the care provided by YPHS can be seen to encourage and facilitate this: striving for continuity in language and culture and even relationship through the RCOs, through family tracing at the Red Cross and through engagement in faith.

In analysis of the project schedule above, I have focused on certain characteristics of the tasks that illustrate the provision of care. I now turn attention to aspects of control present in supported integration. In Chapter 6, I discussed the young men's experiences of the UK asylum system. This revealed a system of arbitrary exclusion, whereby the young men were subjected to tests, assessments and burdens of proof underpinned with a culture of disbelief. At the same time, without leave to remain, the young men were at risk, once they turned 18, of detention or refoulement. For the vast majority of cases, successful navigation through the asylum system was the only means by which young men could attain a reasonably secure immigration status.

The YPHS project schedule detailed tasks concerned with meeting the requirements on young men as asylum-seekers. Part of the care of YPHS was therefore to assist in inserting young men into an extensive mechanism of biometric, legal and technological control. In Chapter 6, I described many experiences of the young men seeking asylum that were highly stressful and detrimental to the mental and physical health (e.g. Kralj and Goldberg, 2005; Chase, 2010; Crawley, 2011). It is difficult, on one hand, to conceive of facilitating insertion into such a system as an act of care. Yet the consequences for a young person who does not secure leave to remain are severe. At the same time, the support staff at YPHS were able to accompany the young men, to be a friendly and familiar presence in a highly adversarial system. The line between care and control here can be seen as either one of mitigation against the worst excesses of the system, or one of complicity.

The relationship between care and control is perhaps not as contentious in relation to other aspects of supported integration, and yet there are aspects of the care discussed above that also, arguably, entail control. The incremental path towards independence as implemented by the support staff is facilitated by the provision of a smart phone, monthly credit and a weekly allowance. The monetary funds are provided by YPHS on a weekly basis. Ultimately, once children's services have released the funds to YPHS, it is the YPHS support workers who have control of the purse strings. Michael would meet with the young men once a week at Rothport City College, during their lunch break. The young men would

collect their money from Michael, and it would also be an opportunity for Michael to see them, relay information, answer any questions. Thus, the YPHS' control of the monetary allowances and their policy of releasing funds ensured at least weekly contact through which Michael could support the young men; the control of the money ensures the relationship of care can take place and can be considered also as a means of maintaining some level of control over the young men.

It is also possible to see elements of control in the influence of the trauma model in the supported integration. The concept of trauma features in much of the refugee studies literature (e.g. Papadopoulos, 2001; Pupavac, 2001; Papadopoulos, 2002; Pupavac, 2008; Marlowe, 2010). Pupavac (2008, p.272), argues that, whilst the 'representation of refugees as troubled victims is inspired by compassion… the medical framework has its hazards'. She adds, 'Culturally, the trauma tag affirms suffering, but it also suggests impaired reason' (ibid., p.272). A consequence of the label of impaired reason that comes with ascriptions of trauma is that it 'raises questions over refugees' capacity for self-determination' (ibid., p.280). The concern is, therefore, that the care provided through organisations like YPHS may be influenced by models of trauma that ascribe diminished capacity to the young men, thus mandating a degree of control.

The trauma model influenced the care provided by YPHS for unaccompanied minors to an extent. Kathleen, for example, felt the provision of basic human needs, such as food and shelter, was congruent with trauma models that built from such a foundation. Michael spoke of his preconceptions of unaccompanied minors prior to the young men arriving in Broomshire:

> *all we had was our preconceptions of refugees and asylum seekers… I think they weren't negative. Obviously a lot of trauma and conflict but not really much in depth understanding and it's just like, you bunch them into one group, refugees and asylum seekers* (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

As a programme of supported integration, the care provided by YPHS relied at times on some degree of control. As distinct from the asylum system, however, this was motivated by a concern for acting in the best interests of the young men, and a belief, congruent with models of child development and youth support generally, that the young men themselves as not always in a position to determine what these best interests are.

Alongside the project schedule detailing an incremental integration path for the young men, another aspect of the care provided by YPHS concerned the relationship the support staff developed with the unaccompanied minor clients. I set out understandings of this relationship below, from the point of view of the support staff, and then discuss how this relates to structures of care and control.

A Relationship of Care and Control

The nature of the care provided by YPHS entailed regular and frequent contact and communication with the young men. When they first arrived in Broomshire, this contact was a daily occurrence. This meant the support workers were able to quickly build a relationship with the young men by establishing familiarity and a degree of trust. Kathleen felt this relationship was the most important thing in the care provided by YPHS, particularly because it was not one of authority but unconditional support:

> *And the relationship is always the most important thing in that they've got someone that they feel has got their back really throughout the whole process. So we're not the solicitor, we're not the social worker, we're not that person in a position of authority. We're there for them…*
>
> (Interview: Kathleen, 9/11)

In addition to this, YPHS reported a relatively high level of staff turnover amongst social workers, which meant that it was the YPHS staff who provided the young men with a degree of continuity. Kathleen added:

> *Which is why the relationship with the key worker here is so important because everyone else changes unfortunately.* (Interview: Kathleen, 9/11)

Wissam said he felt extra responsibility in caring for his unaccompanied minor clients, as Kathleen recounted:

> *I think Wissam was out seeing a friend down in the city centre one Sunday about two weekends after the original four had come to us and saw them in a park. I often think of this story. Saw them in a park 'How did you get down here? Come on guys, like how did?' Like had two in Norbury and two in Palmerston and it's two weeks in and they've got themselves down and they're eating takeaway in a park in the centre. How did they do that? And he said panic rose*.
>
> (Interview: Kathleen, 9/11)

The relationship with the unaccompanied minors, from the point of view of the support workers, was influenced by a perception of the young men's vulnerability. This is exemplified by Wissam's concern above, when the young men made their way independently to the city centre. The care for the young men is manifested here as an increased surveillance and a desire for knowledge regarding the young men's movements; it is manifested as control, or at least a desire for control, in order to keep the young men safe and to manage risk. This same drive to control, as an act of care, is illustrated in the concerns Wissam and Michael expressed regarding some aspects of engagement in faith in the locality.

Wissam was particularly concerned with protecting the young men who were Muslim from Islamic radicalisation. He told me:

> *And it's really important for us because it's to protect them at the end of the day… I'm Muslim so it's easy for me to ask them 'What are they teaching in the mosques?'* (Interview: Lucy and Wissam, 7/17)

He explained that his concern in this area had come from Home Office training he had received, regarding his duty of care within the Prevent Strategy:

> *Yeah. I think it's the training that made me a bit nervous …because I'm thinking 'shit, I've got to protect these kids now'. I've got to make sure they know what's going on and if there is an imam saying stuff like that.*
>
> (Interview: Lucy and Wissam, 7/17)

He added:

> *… we went to the Home Office and one of the officers said there that 'it's a mosque that you're sending your young people to, we've got big concerns with'. And I was like 'Fucking hell. What's going on?'*
>
> (Interview: Lucy and Wissam, 7/17)

The concern over radicalisation reveals an interesting dimension to the structures of care in which the young men are enmeshed. It demonstrates the influence of government policy, regarding management of a religious minority, on the nature of the care provided on a day-to-day basis. Michael was not entirely comfortable with this narrative:

> *I think it's one of those things that is always in your mind that I don't think should be. But it is sort of 'are any of these asylum seekers here for other reasons?' and sort of 'who are they meeting?' 'Why are they meeting?', 'What are they being told?' It does come up in talking to social services and stuff like that. 'Is there any risk of this young person being radicalised?' So, it's on the agenda.*
>
> (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

He added:

> *Should we even be questioning that? You wouldn't be thinking 'are the churches radicalising these young people?'*
>
> (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

We see here a form of governance as an act of care: to keep the young men safe, and to keep the public safe from the young men, the everyday care provided by Michael and Wissam included a top-down requirement for a degree of surveillance, questioning and

control through knowledge of the young men's movements and relationships in this sphere. Yet it is not a requirement that is accepted uncritically; it is tempered through interpretation and through experience of the service providers.

Thus far I have discussed the point of view of service providers Kathleen, Wissam, and Michael. They play and important role in the practices and structures of care and control relevant to the young men. Through them we see not only how programmes of care are formalised but also how these are implemented and negotiated by care givers on a day-to-day basis. I build on this understanding in the next section, where attention shifts to perspectives of the young men themselves regarding their experiences of care and control in the domain of children's services. This reveals that the balance between care and control is dependent not just upon the care giver but upon the care receiver. Furthermore, as this thesis is an investigation into young people's voices and agency, this angle of prioritising their experiences develops understandings of how the young men, as agents, make meaning from and negotiate these structures and relationships.

The Young Men's Experiences of Care and Control within Children's Services

In October 2017, I conducted informal interviews with seven young men I had come to know during the fieldwork months. Of these, Abdullah, Bashir, and Abraham were supported by YPHS Broomshire. The data I have selected from these interviews reveal experiences of care along multiple dimensions. Firstly, the young men found the everyday kindness and friendliness from Michael and Wissam a comfort throughout the fieldwork months. The everyday contact and acts of kindness were helpful to the young men:

> *Wissam, he helped me every day…every day he help. And then sometimes he call us, he say, 'hello, how are you? You good? You all right? Yeah otherwise I didn't know anybody before… he's always happy*
>
> (Interview: Abdullah, 10/17)

According to Kohli, cited in Chapter 3, unaccompanied minors begin to feel safe when they have people around them who are kind, reliable and trustworthy (Kohli, 2011); this aspect of care was felt as very positive for Abdullah and for others, particularly in the earlier months of resettlement when so much was new and unfamiliar.

Care was also experienced by the young men in practical matters. Michael, Wissam, and Lucy took the young men shopping and showed them how to use the local buses. This was especially useful when the young men were new to the area and were dependent on this help, as Abdullah explained:

...because when I come here, I didn't know Rothport. I stay at home like two weeks. I didn't go outside because I didn't know where I was. I didn't speak English. I didn't know where I was. Maybe I forget home.

Then Wissam come and speak to me and Bashir. He take like city centre. He show this place, that way, that place…. Yasir he take with car. Then we go city centre. Then after that we get by bus to city centre. Now we know everything!

(Interview: Abdullah, 10/17)

The practical help Bashir and Abdullah received enabled them to gain independence in getting around the city, thus building a new life that extended beyond their immediate accommodation. Later in 2017, when Bashir and Abdullah were both looking to leave their accommodation and live independently in their own flats, Wissam's practical help continued to be useful. Bashir explained, for example:

I feel ready to be on my own. Michael and Wissam have helped me with housing. Michael is helping me to buy furniture and new stuff for my new flat. I will move in four weeks' time. (Interview, Bashir, 10/17)

This aspect of children's services was experienced as kindness, attentiveness and friendliness, and also as help in developing independence and getting to know the area. The support workers were sometimes appreciated by the young men for what they considered as paternal and moral guidance. For example, Michael explained:

Paulin would say, 'Michael is like a father to me', and I have to say, 'No, I'm your worker and I'll do everything I can for you but…' (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

Alongside this, some of the young men voiced a desire to make sure they chose 'the right way' as they made new lives for themselves. The 'wrong way', Bashir explained, involved bad people:

… the ones who do drugs and things like that… (Interview: Bashir, 10/17)

The care from Wissam and Michael was important to some of the young men as it steered them towards this 'right way'. Abdullah said:

It's… Wissam, like you, like YPHS and like Riversford (his supported accommodation) *will help you build new life…* (they help you so) *you can do Rothport better… and don't do wrong way… because if you don't know the way, you can go the wrong way. Do right.* (Interview, Abdullah, 10/17)

Abraham also referred to Michael as:

My favourite moral person! (Journal notes, 10/17)

There was thus a moral dimension to the care provided through YPHS as experienced by the young men; they looked to Michael and Wissam as role-models and as guides as they built their new lives.

As a caveat, it is important to note here that I spent the most time and had the most conversations with those who responded positively to the official care on offer. Other young men were less able or keen to speak to me at length about this. Abraham, Bashir, Abdullah and others illustrated a drive towards independence from the social care on offer. in other cases, this level of independence was not possible or was frustrated, for example, when an asylum claim was refused or when a placement broke down. The insights from the young men regarding their experiences of care are necessarily partial.

The Tension in Practice Between Care and Control in Children's Services

I have so far discussed a formalised programme of care from YPHS, which was end-driven towards adult independence. This involved teaching the young men basic skills, such as shopping for food, as well as showing the young men how to get around the city and access services and activities so that the young men could build independent relationships that were considered, by children's services, healthy. In tension with this care, however, are aspects of control. This is particularly stark in relation to insertion of the young men into the asylum system, yet also evident in the influence of the trauma model, which can result in diminishing the perceived capacity of the young men.

From the point of view of the care givers in this instance, the relationship with the young men was absolutely key to providing care and this relationship was marked by presence, continuity and building trust. From the point of view of the young men, the care from YPHS was experienced as regular acts of kindness and friendliness, as well as practical help that enabled them to get to know the city and beyond and to thus build relationships. In addition to this, care was experienced as moral guidance, helping to keep the young men on what they themselves considered to be 'the right path'.

In the next section, I turn to discuss the tension between care and control in relation to the domain of accommodation. Whereas the care provided by Michael and Wissam was one of continuity over more than a year, my material regarding accommodation reflects the young men's fluctuating needs and subsequent actions.

ACCOMMODATION

As looked-after children, the unaccompanied minors I knew during the fieldwork months were accommodated by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act (1989). As I shall explain and illustrate there is considerable variability and fluctuation in accommodation arrangements, with a blurring of lines between care and control informed

by the interplay of multiple factors. I begin by discussing care and control in relation to independent living and then move to discuss foster arrangements. Following this, I focus on people's experiences of care and control within the domain of accommodation. Here I centre on the construction of temporary safe spaces for the young men, the phenomenon of mutual care amongst unaccompanied minors and the mediating role of external relationships, such as friendships with peers, influencing young men's experiences. For illustration, I draw on the stories of some of the young men I spent time with: Amir, Zoran, Serhat, Abraham, Bashir, Abdullah and Marwan.

Care and Control from Accommodation Providers and Foster Carers

Several of the unaccompanied minors were accommodated in one of two supported lodgings in Broomshire: Newcourt House and Riversford. My enquiry into these providers brought up issues around continuity, familiarity and presence, complimenting the findings in relation to children's services.

Riversford was designed as one large building comprised of individual units and a shared social space. The set up in this lodging meant that the young men accommodated there would necessarily pass by a reception area to enter and access the building. Michael explained:

> *It's a different set-up at Riversford so you have to walk pass the reception to leave your flat whereas Newcourt House is sort of all the flats are sort of away from the office so people come and go without members of staff even seeing them.*
>
> (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

The set-up at Newcourt House comprised a series of separate buildings, with the reception area in a separate building to the blocks of individual flats; the young men did not need to walk past this to exit the site so there was no default social interaction between the young men and support staff as occurred at Riversford. Michael felt this automatic communication between the young men and the support staff at Riversford was positive for the young men in providing a level of care:

> *That sort of 'How are you doing?' and 'What are you up to?' That sort of thing's been really good.* (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

The architecture of Riversford therefore also implied a degree of surveillance of the young men; their comings and goings were known and tended to be accompanied with a social interaction with a support worker. In addition to this, Riversford was able to offer a continuity of staff that was lacking in Newcourt House, as Wissam explained:

> *We weren't worried with the lads that were at Riversford, absolutely not. Like Lucy said, there's good support there, really good scheme. We were very*

worried about the clients at Newcourt House and we still are… It's just there's no consistency in support there. They've got a lot of agency workers there that come on night shifts so I know that if a young person wants something, they're going to be clueless, they're not going to know what to do. And even having regular support sessions, having a support plan in place, you know, just the structure of support in Newcourt House, it wasn't there compared to what it is in Riversford. And there's a big frustration.

(Interview: Lucy and Wissam, 7/17)

The arrangements at Riversford imposed a degree of control on the young men. Yet, at the same time, the young men could be better supported and could get to know the staff entrusted with their care. With the exception of Bashir and Abdullah, all other young men initially accommodated at Newcourt House requested to leave and to move into foster care. This was not the case in Riversford. We can understand here the value for the young men, certainly in the early months following arrival, of a form of care manifested as a constant presence. Even casual interaction with care-providers was important to enabling the young men to feel safe and settled and the more regular and familiar this interaction, the better. The variability between the care provided by each institution point to a need for at least some minimum level of interaction by default, in terms of consistency in personnel and in terms of frequency.

The salience of consistency and relationships of familiarity applies also to the provision of foster care. From my observations over the fieldwork months, foster care for the young men in this context offered a more intensive relationship, characterised by both care and control, for the young men and their carers. In some cases, this was illustrated by the adoption of the young men of familial names for their foster carers. My journal notes from September 2017 mention Serhat referring to his foster carers as 'Nan and Pops'. Abraham also referred to his foster carer's mother as his 'grandma', as he revealed in interview with me in October 2017, when he was discussing attaining leave to remain:

You know my foster carer, she cried. Trust me, she's crying, really crying… and my grandma, my foster carer's mum, she's dancing and singing…

(Interview: Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17)

Naomi and her family fostered Amir, a young man from Iran. Naomi and her husband were keen to treat Amir similarly to their own children, as Naomi explained:

I think I try and be really fair and treat him in a way that I would treat my own children… I don't give him a kiss and a cuddle like I do them. But if I hadn't seen him all evening I would knock on his door and say 'goodnight' or, you know, if he comes

in, I ask how he is. Round the table at dinner, 'how has your day been?' 'What have you been up to?' That sort of thing. (Interview: Naomi, 10/17)

For Naomi and her husband, their decision to foster Amir was motivated by a feeling of responsibility, stemming from their Christian faith, to provide care for Amir in the absence of his parents. Amir had arrived unaccompanied from Iran aged 16. He was Christian and had fled Iran to escape religious persecuition. Naomi noticed Amir at her local church, which was located in Westford and had a number of Iranian converts within its congregation. Naomi explained her reasons for fostering Amir to me:

> … *the reason we decided to do it was that Amir was at church and he was the same age as our children. I didn't realise it at the time. I thought he was older. Then I realised that he was actually quite young. And he was living in a horrible hostel. And I just knew that somewhere in Iran his mum and dad were hoping to dear God that someone would look after him. I thought, 'well, why not really?' We've got a room we could use. So actually we should be looking after him. That's what I would want someone to do* (for my kids). (Interview: Naomi, 10/17)

Naomi's care for Amir, therefore, was grounded in a parental-substitute framing. Amir became involved in family life, joining the family on holidays and taking his part of the chores. Elements of this implied a degree of control on Amir, in the same way that Naomi expected her own children to keep her informed of their movements. For example, on one occasion, Amir stayed out later in the evening than had been arranged. Naomi told me:

> *I did say to him after that, you know, 'You must tell me where you are. If you're going to be late, that's fair enough. But you need to let us know'* (Interview: Naomi, 10/17)

In the next section, I explore the point of view of the young men regarding their accommodation. This demonstrates how they not only responded to the care offered to them, but also how these responses changed with shifting circumstances. It shows the young men interpreting care and control in light of their own circumstances, needs and ambitions.

Young Men's Experiences of Care and Control through Accommodation

Accommodation played an important role for many of the young people in terms of providing a space to deal with grief and sadness. Abdullah, who shared a flat with Bashir at Newcourt House, told me he would stay home when he was missing his family:

> *Sometime I feel like, I'm not feeling sad, but I'm feeling… very, very….* (pause)… *because I think about my family. Just I stay at home. I can't go anywhere… Sometime if I need to feeling good, I listen to music.*
>
> (Interview: Abdullah, 10/17)

Accommodation could thus comprise a safe space where the young men may choose to grieve. Abraham made this space of safety when he moved from Newcourt House to foster care. He had been unhappy at Newcourt House, telling Michael:

> *… I don't want to live* (in) *fucking shit Newcourt House*
>
> (Interview: Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17)

And telling me that he had found Newcourt House;

> *Very lonely…* (Interview: Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17)

Abraham was found a foster family nearer Rothport city centre and the care he received there helped him to create a safe space where he could grieve for what he had lost, namely his family. Abraham developed a closeness with his foster carers and their extended family. He joined them on a holiday to the coast and they gave him a small birthday party when he turned 17. Abraham seemed to withdraw from social activities to an extent and to retreat into the care and place of safety he had at home. He told me:

> *I'm not very good at going out. I prefer to stay at home. Sometimes I like to go to RYW, sometimes the library, sometimes Westford… most of the time I like to read books. I like listening to music,*
>
> (Interview: Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17)

For a time, the constancy and accountability of foster care was reassuring for Abraham; he felt safe, because there were people who cared about him to whom he was accountable. He needed the control of being looked after to feel cared for. In this way, he had a sense of being guided and protected as he made a home in Rothport. The practical tasks of home, such as mealtimes and cleaning, were taken care of for him whilst he got used to going to college and learning English. Foster care staggered the responsibilities and tasks of resettlement for Abraham. Yet after more than a year, Abraham left his foster home and returned to Newcourt House while he waited for a flat to become available through social housing. Amir also left foster care at Naomi's after several months in order to live independently.

By this time, both young men had acquired leave to remain, they were proficient in English, and had established networks of friendship, with college placements and part-time work. Their circumstances had changed, and with that came a desire to leave the care and control of the foster family and to live with greater independence: to forego the care and the control for a more distant and less frequent support provided by statutory services for care leavers. Abraham told me, once he was ready to leave the foster family environment, that he had

decided not to be sad anymore saying ‘nothing will change’; he had, to an extent, come to terms with having lost his family.

Peer relationships played an important role in mediating the care within accommodation for the young men. At times, such relationships provided mutual care. One such example is the friendship between Abdullah and Bashir, who both arrived unaccompanied from Sudan and were accommodated together in Newcourt House. Abdullah and Bashir were the only two of the young men accommodated in Newcourt House who did not ask to leave. When I interviewed Bashir in October 2017, he spoke really positively of Newcourt House and the care he received there:

> *Newcourt House was good. They were good at taking care of you. If you go out, they call you and check you are okay. They can help you if you are ill. If you have problems, they can help you, they can call your support worker. It’s a good place to come if you are new.* (Interview: Bashir, 10/17)

Michael felt that Bashir and Abdullah may have fared better at Newcourt House because of the friendship the two young men developed:

> *I don’t know what it is about Bashir and Abdullah. Maybe their friendship because they’re in the flat together is particularly strong… they’re very self-sufficient.*
>
> (Interview: Michael, 5/17)

Bashir told me:

> *It was good to share with Abdullah because at that time it was difficult for me to speak English and it was hard to have a conversation. Abdullah and I are both from Sudan and it was good to be with someone who knows your language.*
>
> (Interview with Bashir, 10/17)

Abdullah expanded on this, commenting on having Bashir as someone with whom he would spend his time:

> *I share a flat with Bashir… and we do everything together, food, when we go out, we go out together… like a good friend*
>
> (Interview with Abdullah, 10/17)

In the early months following arrival, Bashir and Abdullah were waiting for college placements and had not yet made other friends. Consequently, they were particularly important to each other in providing company. Bashir explained:

> *For the first one or two months I just stayed at home… at first, we always watched TV. It was a little bit boring but we were two so it wasn't that bad.*
>
> (Interview with Bashir, 10/17)

Whereas other young men had felt lonely and isolated at Newcourt House and had found the level of care to be insufficient for their needs, the mutual care Bashir and Abdullah provided each other seemed to mitigate against this lack. With some of the other young men I knew, however the draw of peer relationships was sometimes in competition with the demands coming from the foster home. Marwan's experience illustrates this point and further demonstrates the blurring of the line between care and control in this particular context.

Marwan, an unaccompanied minor from Sudan, was attending college in Rothport and the travel from his home in Wormleigh and back took at least 90 minutes. Because he was being fostered in a rural area, he had to leave the drop-in at Rothport Youth Works (RYW) early in order to catch the last bus. In July 2017, Marwan left his foster home and was refusing to go back. My journal notes from that time read:

> *Marwan has been sleeping rough for three nights now… Marwan had left his foster placement because his foster mother spoke to him 'harshly'. There had been an incident involving using the tumble dryer, which Marwan had used again rather than hanging out his laundry… Marwan's foster mother had said 'fuck' apparently. Marwan told me 'even my own mother didn't speak to me like this'.*
>
> (Journal Entry, 7/17)

Greg, the manager at RYW, spoke to Marwan's foster mother on the phone. She said he was welcome to come home, that she had been very worried and that the police had been looking for him. My notes continue:

> *I… heard from Greg the next day. Marwan had refused to go home and eventually the police had arrived. The police told Marwan that he was jeopardising his leave to remain by not complying. He was placed under a PPO (Policy Protection Order) and was taken back to his foster home. Greg reckons he will probably have left again by now*
>
> (Journal Entry, 7/17)

Although Marwan was fostered in Wormleigh, the bulk of the relationships he built up were in Rothport. As time progressed, more and more of his peers were leaving foster care or supported accommodation and living on their own. Thus, they were free to engage in social activities with their peers on a more autonomous basis. The option of independent living for

Marwan, however, relied on him remaining in a different local authority. Marwan was compelled to return to his foster home in Wormleigh and his temporary immigration status was used as leverage to force him to comply. The care experienced by Marwan was thus extremely controlling because it was at odds with his own evaluation of his needs, desires and best interests. The conflict between the care that was available to him and the care he wanted produced conditions of control for Marwan.

Like Marwan, Zoran's experience of foster care was at times in conflict with the peer relationships he had developed. Zoran had asked to leave Riversford to be placed with a foster family. He was fostered by Jenny and Steven in Westford, Rothport. For some of the time, Zoran reported that he was happy in this placement. At other times, he said that he was very unhappy, that they did not spend time with him. The email I sent to Lucy in March is illustrative of this:

> *Zoran reported to me on March 15th that he had been locked out of the house and on 16th March he repeated this and added that he had been locked out of the kitchen. On 21st March, Zoran told me he was still unhappy with his family because of clothing and money.* (Email: me to Lucy, 3/17)

It appeared that Zoran was able to resolve some of the issues with his foster carers and the concerns about being locked out of the house and then the kitchen were explained as misunderstandings; Jenny and Steven were both very active in caring for Zoran when he had health issues, including taking him to Accident and Emergency in the early hours of the morning when Zoran felt very unwell. Lucy emailed me again in March 2017 and relayed details of a meeting that took place with Zoran, his foster carers, Lucy and two social workers:

> *Discussed helpful options that may help Zoran to feel better for example waking up foster carers at night if he was unable to sleep.*
>
> (Email: Lucy to me, 3/17)

Alongside this, Zoran encountered some difficulties at college and at RYW with some other young people, which meant that he withdrew from RYW and was excluded from college some weeks prior to the start of the summer holidays in 2017. There were concerns raised by social services that he was being used for nefarious purposes by some members of the Kurdish community on Marlowe Street.

In Chapter 5, I introduced the area around Marlowe Street and discussed the different communities that would meet there. The Kurdish community became of particular interest to social services during 2017, following police concerns about possible trafficking taking

place there. As Zoran stopped attending RYW and the city's RCOs, he spent more and more of his time on Marlowe Street. At times Zoran was happy with his carers and called on them to help him, for example, when he was rushed to A&E. On the other hand, there were other complex factors impacting on this relationship and Zoran's main social network on Marlowe Street was rendered in some way deviant and forced Zoran to remain secretive about his behaviour. Once on Marlowe Street, care and control remained blurred for Zoran. He was, to an extent, cared for on Marlowe Street; he was given food, a place to spend time with other people, and a chance to earn money. On the other hand, if the suspicions of the police and social services were founded, the control over Zoran, who may have been a victim of trafficking was very sinister indeed. In this complex and volatile context, there was extreme blurring of the lines between care and control.

Tensions in Care and Control: Models of Accommodation Provision and the Young Men's Experiences

There are several significant dimensions to the relationship between care and control as experienced by young men in this context. Experiences are varied and fluctuating, reflecting the heterogeneity of the young men concerned, the changes that take place in the circumstances of their lives and the nature of integration as an evolving process. We can surmise, however, that good care, from the point of view of the young men, involves regular, friendly, kind contact with adults who show concern for them and can maintain a long-term presence in their lives. This contact needs to be by design; not all young men are able to ask for it, particularly when they have just arrived. The structural issues underpinning the provision of accommodation, such as precarious employment patterns for support staff and a high turnover of staff as a consequence, also impact on experiences of care. Models of care that can sustain a continuity of staff to implement support are better equipped to meet the care needs of the young men.

Alongside such structural issues, my research points to a realisation of care in the form of control that is in fact desirable for some of the young men for a period of time. For example, having a support worker or foster carer who should know your whereabouts can be beneficial for the young men, who may feel they supported by having someone look out for them. In this way, the accountability that comes from living with a carer can provide a sense of safety and a degree of belonging. This resonates with Kohli's (2011) conceptualisation of unaccompanied minors seeking safety in resettlement:

> *… for children who may have moved away from family, friends, locations and a sense of entitlement to a home, the need to belong to someone, to somewhere, becomes a conscious goal.* (ibid., p.315)

Foster carers and, to an extent, accommodation support workers, provided that sense of belonging for a period of time.

Both care and control were manifested with greater intensity in foster care than in supported accommodation and many of the young men opted for this in the early months of resettlement. In foster care, many young men developed relationships with their carers that had familial characteristics of care. At times, the young men were able to make use of these safe spaces to retreat from the outside world and to grieve for what they had lost. Such sojourns, however, were often temporary and, in general, most of the young men I knew eventually opted for more independent living after a period of time.

Peer relationships, in the form of mutual support, provided additional structures of care for some of the young men. In other instances, peer relationships were at times in opposition with the care provided. This was evident in Marwan's story, where his experience of foster care blurred into control when his own evaluation of his best interests conflicted with the best interests that had been determined on his behalf. There was further blurring of the line between care and control as illustrated in Zoran's case, which gives testimony to competing claims to care as well as the opacity of some relationships of care/control in areas. The caring experience is mediated by multiple factors, which can be complex and elusive.

It is evident, however, that the young men were active in negotiating the meeting of their own care needs. This included requesting foster care over supported accommodation and threatening to run away when this change was not happening fast enough. It includes, for example, in Marwan's case, sabotage of family placement and forcing the local authority to take responsibility whilst sleeping rough and refusing to return home. The young men made use of the resources available to them, including personnel employed in youth services and the charity sector, and would often 'vote with their feet': Zoran continued to hang out on Marlowe Street, but he sought to maintain a degree of secrecy around this.

The final domain of this chapter concerns formal education and the young men's experiences of care and control within this. I seek to add to the understanding of care and control for unaccompanied minors in this context by focussing on the phenomenon of control through exclusion, by relating experiences of care and control to wider structural issues in education, and by revealing the young men's negotiation of educational structures in order to realise their ambitions and aspirations.

FORMAL EDUCATION

I begin by outlining the provision of formal education for unaccompanied minors in Rothport and relating it to care and control. Following this, I focus on the young men's experiences of care and control within this domain.

Care and Control in the Domain of Education

Existing literature concerned with unaccompanied minors positions access to education as key to psychosocial development and integration (O'Higgins et al., 2017; Ott and O'Higgins, 2019). Education for unaccompanied minors, therefore, is not solely a vehicle for formal qualifications and skills that will be of use in the labour market, but serves wider purposes of care for the young people, including providing opportunities to make friends and to gain cultural knowledge. Most of the young men I met were enrolled at Rothport City College at either of its two campuses in the city. Consequently, the findings presented in this section refer to college rather than school attendance. Rothport already had a well-established provision of formal education for new migrants to the city involving ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision including Maths and ICT. In addition to this, the young men were provided with support through the virtual school, which is a local authority body responsible for the education of all looked-after children. There was thus an additional layer of care for the young men but also additional surveillance and supervision of educational progress, attendance, and attitude to learning: the care and control came hand in hand. For the young men with whom I spent time, one of the biggest difficulties in this domain was to do with accessing college.

Rothport City College was one of the only formal providers of ESOL for the young people seeking asylum in and around Rothport. Abdullah, Zoran, Bashir and Fazaad were all under the care of Broomshire local authority but accessed education in Rothport. Demand on Rothport's ESOL provision was therefore high. In addition, Further Education in the UK had experienced large-scale cuts since 2010 (Nash, 2015a, 2015b). Long waiting lists are the reality for the majority of ESOL-providers in the UK and most of these providers cite inadequate government funding as the cause of long delays in accessing ESOL (Refugee Action, 2017).

Abdullah told me that he and Bashir had to wait seven months for their college place;

> *Yeah, I waited… until September… 7 months…just I stay at home, sometimes chilling out, yeah, we go meet friends, we go football, gym*
>
> (Interview, Abdul 10/17)

Farid also told me;

> *We've got a good teacher at my college. They teach really well- they do everything nice. I had to wait for college. This is the problem. It's a bad thing. I had to wait more than 6 months and I was under 18.*
>
> (Interview, Farid 10/17)

Local councillor, Anna Lawson, explained the lack of ESOL availability in the school system post-16:

> *… trying to get them* (asylum-seeking children) *into school or college has been absolutely impossible… because the schools won't take them. Because they're 15, 16, 17 with no English… they* (the schools) *are obliged to take them under 16. But over 16 nobody is really obliged to take them but the young person is obliged to be in education. So the way the government changed the law… when they raised the participation age to 18, was that it is the responsibility of the young person to make sure they are in education, employment or training up to the age of 18. And these young people want to be but there is no provision for post-16 ESOL*
>
> (Interview: Anna, 10/17)

Consequently, many of the young men were reliant upon spaces becoming available at Rothport City College, or a smaller provision in Broomshire. In addition to this, Rothport City College would not enrol young people who present after February, meaning those arriving after this time had to wait until the start of the following academic year. In the meantime, many of the young men attended the ESOL classes available in Rothport's various RCOs. However, this was not a full-time provision, as Abdullah explained:

> *I was going to RRS and Frontiers. But not like everyday because it's like twice a week and we go like 10 o'clock, we finish half past twelve. It's not enough. It's not like college. College we go half past nine to half past three.*
>
> (Interview: Abdullah, 10/17)

Kofi also preferred college to the provision at RSS, explaining:

> *I went there, I met people, you know. It's not near to my age. Most of them… I'm too young or they're too old. There's no link between us so it's very hard.*
>
> (Interview: Kofi, 10/17)

Structures of care for unaccompanied minors are illustrated here with a network of educational provision that was well-established. The element of control, however, is related to structural difficulties whereby insufficient provision means that some young people are denied access for several months. The alternative provision at RCOs was, in many cases, unable to meet the needs of the young men, although it was a useful stop-gap for some. In practice, structural issues meant that some young men were excluded from the structure of care that is formal education.

Once the young men were given access to college, they were provided with a formal education which would lead to official qualifications and would equip them with necessary

skills in order to access the labour market or to continue with their studies. The college day was structured, there were rules of behaviour, and expectations of attendance and punctuality. In this regard, college was a controlling space for the young men. College was also a social space, where the young men could make friends with different peers and could join in with extra-curricular activities such as sports. Abdullah explained that he had learnt English at college quickly through meeting and talking with lots of other young people:

> *… I had a lot of friends. Yeah, I talked every day. Because if I don't know, it doesn't matter. Okay, but just I talked… I met a lot of English friends, Pakistan, a lot of different countries.* (I met them) *all in college, RYW, gym, football…*
>
> (Interview: Abdullah, 10/17)

Part of the provision of care through college, therefore, was in providing a practical space where the young men could spend time together and develop their relationships.

In the next section, I build on this outline of college as a space of care and control by considering the experiences of the young men in this domain. These experiences demonstrate once more the importance of relationship as a source of care but also the diversity of the young men's lives and how this impacts the perception of care and control.

The Young Men's Experiences of Care and Control in Education

Once allocated a space in college, many of the young men reported positive experiences. Ibrahim said the teachers really supported him at his college in Broomshire:

> *… like English for example, if I need help regarding English I would go and I would ask, 'Hi, I don't understand this one. How can I make it better? How can I do this one?' and then, you know, they would help me.*
>
> (Interview: Abraham and Ibrahim, 10/17)

For some of the young men, therefore, the teachers were caring and approachable; they felt able to ask for help. Kofi expressed positive experiences of learning:

> *… the teachers are very nice. They support you when you ask something. You can talk freely- they won't beat you. So the way they teach is very very good. I really admire the way they teach you. Giving notes for students and something like that… The way that they teach you- you won't forget it… it's very memorable… You play games or something like that.* (Interview: Kofi, 10/17)

He found the style of teaching more caring than what he was accustomed to in Ethiopia:

> *Back in my country it's very difficult to get an education. Me and the students, the relationship with the teacher is so dictator… Even sometimes you are afraid of*

asking the questions… but if you don't ask it's so so hard, you feel if the answer isn't correct you might have trouble… They hit you with a stick. You have no idea… The government is dictator. The teacher is dictator.

(Interview: Kofi, 10/17)

Kofi's experiences of teachers who would help him, who would make learning fun, and who would not hit him if he asked a question made the experience of education in this context a caring one, rather than the controlling relationship he was used to in Ethiopia.

The structures of education, both as forms of care and forms of control, were highly desirable for many of the young men, who placed great importance on educational attainment. Many of these young men were very motivated to attain good grades at GCSE and beyond and were intending to pursue careers in medicine, architecture, business and dentistry. Bashir told me:

I like college because the teaching is good and I've got lots of friends from all different countries. I am studying English, Maths and ICT. After my GCSEs, I will go to university. I want to study medicine and I will have to work hard.

(Interview: Bashir, 10/17)

Kazim, a young man from Sudan, told me:

My hopes for the future are that I want to go to university. I will do IT or be an interpreter. Or a dentist. Or an architect. I have to do things otherwise I will just be sleeping and there is no meaning in my life. (Interview: Kazim, 10/17)

The structures of care in college (the friendly, helpful teachers and opportunities to make friends) as well the structures of control (mandatory attendance, formal curriculum and assessment) were in some cases resources for the young men to help them realise their ambitions and responsibilities.

It is easier for me to present findings that reflect positive experiences of college for the young men. Less prominent are those experiences that were more difficult, primarily because these young men were less keen on talking to me or may have found it difficult to say anything negative and so would just say everything was fine. Cynthia, who worked at the virtual school in Broomshire, was more aware of some of the difficulties that some of the young men were facing in college and she would share these in team meetings at YPHS on occasion. Some of the young men, she said, had poor attendance. One issue concerned a young Kurdish man, Fazaad. He had stopped attending college by October 2017 as he felt he was being bullied by the teacher. At an earlier meeting, Cynthia had reported that Fazaad was having difficulties with his teacher, who had said something sarcastic to him.

Cynthia felt that college was particularly difficult for him as he had not been to school before. The structures of college for Fazaad, therefore, were felt as distinctly uncaring and his response was to walk away.

Zoran also experienced difficulties at college, in part due to the other dynamics in his life at the time that seemed to centre on Marlowe Street. In addition to this, Zoran also had little experience of formal education before he left Kurdistan, and thus was not accustomed to the formal structures of college; these were experienced as alien and controlling. Zoran had difficulties re-enrolling in college in September 2017, as there had been an incident with another student. There were concerns that his behaviour in college the previous academic year might have been related to some of the concerns social services had with areas of Marlowe Street and the relationships Zoran had there. Although he was re-admitted to college, other difficulties meant he left Rothport shortly after this.

Tensions in Care and Control in the Domain of Education

Access and attainment in education were prioritised by the adults caring for the young men and by the young men themselves. It is clear that some of the young men I spoke to experienced college as caring; they found the teachers to be kind and approachable, and the learning to be fun. In addition to this, the elements of control inherent in formal education, such as formal assessment, regular attendance monitoring and an institutionalised curriculum, were highly desirable for the young men, who wanted the skills and qualifications that this form of education provides. College was also a space where the young men could make and sustain relationships, and thus built their own networks of mutual care.

One of the primary difficulties the young men experienced was the control of access to college. Further Education has for nearly a decade now been at the forefront of cuts to public services that accompanied the austerity agenda (Adams, 2019). One consequence of this was a shortage of college places for the young people arriving in Rothport and surrounding areas.

The care provided through college was also mediated by the heterogeneity of experiences of the young men in the classrooms. Those who had little prior experience of formal education found it more difficult to adjust to the rigidity of the college system and to access the curriculum, while others were able to utilise the structures of the college to further their aims. Such experiences within education are inevitably influenced by personal histories, including previous exposure to formal educational structures, but also relationships outside of school, and the apparent legitimacy of these relationships in the eyes of statutory authorities. Perceptions of care and control inevitably become blurred, with some young men feeling the control of the formal education system a constraint and a source of frustration, and others finding it highly desirable and, therefore, more caring.

SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed structures of care and control in the experiences of young, unaccompanied people seeking asylum. I have related my findings to the complex relationship between care and control. The line between the two is fluid and dynamic in response to shifting circumstances and the wants and needs of the young men themselves.

I have focused on the domain of social care, rather than social work, although they are related. This is because the bulk of my data in this domain comes from engagement with support workers at YPHS. I demonstrated here that YPHS staff developed a model of supported integration specific to the needs of unaccompanied minors. This approach to integration was incremental and end-driven, steering towards eventual independence from YPHS support. The experiences of this support, from the point of view of the young men, were generally positive and found to be caring. The young men seemed to appreciate the care from and the relationships with Wissam, Michael and Lucy, who provided practical support but also a constancy and continuity as well as concern for their daily wellbeing.

There are similarities here with data from the domain of accommodation where, again, care as manifest in constancy and continuity were found to be helpful for the young men. Several of them chose to leave supported accommodation in the early months of their arrival in Broomshire, opting instead for foster family placements in and around Rothport. In some cases, these young men then returned to more independent living sometime later, as their needs and ambitions shifted over time. Relationships forged with foster carers and others were significant but transient. They offered a degree of accountability and belonging, with which the young men were able to construct safe spaces. One exception to this is that of Abdullah and Bashir, who appeared to find that initial care and sense of companionship in each other.

Consideration of the domain of formal education reveals a difficulty for many of the young men in accessing college. Alongside this, many of the young men were eager for formal education and felt it was important to work hard to attain success in this domain. Others experienced some difficulties in adapting to the formal structures of college and the relationships therein, as well as managing this aspect of one's new life with other relationships and pulls from different parts of the city.

The line between care and control is constantly shifting; at times, certainly in the early months of resettlement, some of the young men sought the protection of adult supervision and presence. Over time, some developed greater confidence, established their own social networks, improved their levels of English and were granted leave to remain. In this new context, they might then seek a greater level of independence away from both the care and control of the foster family home. Alongside this, there is a blurring of the line between care and control. Abdullah, for instance, felt the guidance and interventions from Wissam,

Michael and others were important to help him stay ‘on the right path’. Such interventions were necessary, he felt, because he was young. Conversely, protective measures put in place for Zoran and others to avoid going to Marlowe Street placed limits on his participation, which he ultimately circumnavigated.

In the next chapter, I propose an analysis of the data presented in this thesis more generally returning directly to the themes of agency and integration discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. This includes attention to care and control and the tension between them, as well as a focus on the means by which the young men navigate and negotiate these tensions. I argue for a recognition of the young men as making use of the resources available to them, material and non-material, in varied and shifting contexts.

CHAPTER 8: AGENCY AND INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I revisit the core theoretical concepts of agency and integration in relation to unaccompanied minors in light of the findings I have presented. I begin with a discussion relating to understandings and practices of integration of unaccompanied minors from the point of view of adult service providers. Here I explain a model of 'incremental independence', which points to commonalities in understandings and practices across different domains of service provision. Following this, I focus on young men's understandings and practices of integration, organised along the three trajectories of resettlement of unaccompanied minors identified by Kohli (2011). This is integrated with the conceptual language of social capital taken from Ager and Strang (2004), as outlined in Chapter 3 where I set out a conceptual framework for integration.

In the final part of this chapter, I revisit the conceptual framework of integration outlined in Chapter 3 and offer two models of integration informed by the empirical material in subsequent chapters. Finally, I draw together analysis of empirical material with regard to the conceptual framework of agency developed in Chapter 2. In the context of the asylum system, I propose a continuum of responses illustrating the ways in which the young men respond in situations of 'thinned' agency (Klocker, 2007)

UNDERSTANDINGS OF INTEGRATION ACROSS DOMAINS

I begin this discussion with a focus on understandings of unaccompanied minors' integration as an incremental process towards an end-state of adult completion. Figure 22, below, is a sketch I have formed as an outline of this process.

Incremental Independence

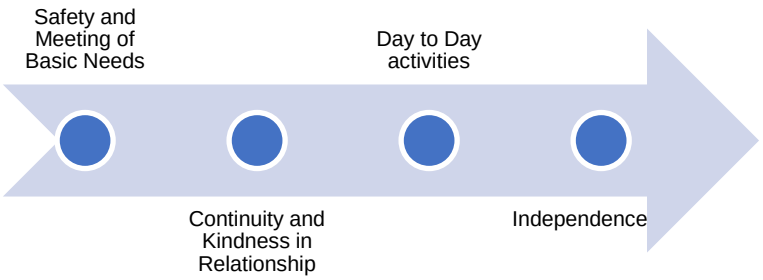


Figure 22 Incremental Independence. Author's own.

The four stages outlined in Figure 22 above refer to a broad programme steering the provision of services for unaccompanied minors across the domains identified in Chapter 7 of this thesis: formal education, children's services and accommodation. In practice, these were not always discrete and merged into one another. Nonetheless, there is an overriding sense of progression and temporality in terms of unaccompanied minors moving from one stage to the next and this is a sense that is shared across domains.

The first stage I have described as 'safety and meeting of basic needs'. The empirical material relating to this is explored in Chapter 7, where I described how YPHS understood this as emanating from a trauma recovery model, where food and a roof over one's head served as a foundation on which to re-build. Yet this provision is more than 'bed-bath-bread' care (Derluyn and Broekaert, 2008, p.327). It is the meeting of basic human needs such as shelter and food but with varying levels of adult supervision. In supported accommodation, the young men were provided with a key worker and there was always at least one member of staff available. In foster care, this supervision was more intense and framed as familial care. Yet both spaces constitute a provision specific to unaccompanied minors as children; the spaces of 'childhood' and 'adulthood' are distinct and clearly demarcated. Unaccompanied minors require supervised meeting of basic needs because they are children.

In building a conceptual framework from which to understand the integration of unaccompanied minors in Chapter 3, I turned to the work of Kohli (2011) who identified 'safety' as one trajectory for unaccompanied minors as they engaged in the process of resettlement. Kohli notes (ibid.) that at the point of the first trajectory, unaccompanied minors are yet to acquire a sense of safety. Accommodation in its most basic sense provides a level of practical safety. Yet this sense of safety is extended through continuity and presence in the form of support staff or foster carers, as I discussed in Chapter 7. In this way, the stage of 'safety and meeting of basic needs', identified above in Figure 22, merged into the second stage of 'continuity and kindness in relationship'. The young men can form relationships with support workers and foster carers, in the form of social bridges, and the nature of these relationships (regular, quotidian, kind) helps the young men to build a sense of psychological safety.

In situations of foster care, there was a clearer demarcation of child/adult distinctions; the family is constructed as a site of child-care and protection (Murray and Barnes, 2010). The nature of this relationship is intended to provide a sense of safety and security for the young man; he is not alone in a new city and has an adult present in his daily life to take some of the responsibility and to offer protection from the adult world. Thus, the young men are positioned developmentally in a space of childhood, where their 'newness' intensifies their presumed vulnerability.

There are several points of intersection between the conceptual framework relating to agency I developed in Chapter 2 and that of integration I developed in Chapter 3. One of these points of intersection concerns similarities between developmental models of childhood and incremental approaches to integration. Developmental models of childhood are premised upon the vision of the incomplete child on a biologically-determined path towards the fulness of adulthood (Prout and James, 1997). I refer here to an account of how agency and integration is conventionally seen; my own findings do not endorse a developmental approach to childhood in this context. Incremental integration, as I have outlined above in Figure 22, positions the unaccompanied minor in the protective, pre-adult space of the family, where he acquires the skills, knowledge and social capital required of integration in the same way a child acquires the status of adulthood through developmental and socialisation of models of childhood. In this model, one learns to become integrated into society through immersion in society's space of childhood.

The third stage of incremental integration I have identified as 'day-to-day activities'. In the early days of resettlement, these day-to-day activities, as promoted by support workers or foster carers, for example, focussed on social bonds, such as those formed at RCO drop-ins. As time passed, day-to-day activities moved towards opportunities for the formation of friendships based on social bridges. College was especially important in this regard and offered wider integration opportunities for some of the young men, where they were able to form friendships based on common interests and ambitions for the future, such as academic attainment. Such friendships were a step towards adult independence; they were a means by which the young men would gain fluency in English and become less dependent on support workers or foster carers for companionship. The idea here is that, as time passes, the young men prefer to spend their time with friends their own age. They are, in a sense, growing up. If we return to Kohli's (2011) model, the young men have moved from a trajectory of 'safety' through 'belonging', towards one of 'success'.

In the understandings of integration across domains, 'success' is largely equated with independence. At this point, the young men maintain relationships that, in the eyes of service providers, are considered 'healthy' and these tend to be based on social bridges rather than social bonds. At the same time, continued attendance at college and other regulated spaces such as youth groups and sports clubs, has provided the young men with plenty of opportunities to learn and grow confident in English. Social links are also formed with FE colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). As the young men turn 18, if they have leave to remain, they can also develop links through, for example, opening their own bank accounts, learning to drive, and eventually moving into independent accommodation.

In this model of incremental integration, the recognition of the agency of the young men is not immediately apparent. Rather, there are parallels between this model and that of the

'gardening metaphor' that has historically been invoked, and continues to be invoked, in literature and practice pertaining to child development and education (Mintz, 2018). In one iteration, (Gopnik, 2016), the gardening metaphor is compared favourably with that of carpentry:

> *The good gardener works to create fertile soil that can sustain a whole ecosystem of different plants with different strengths and beauties- and with different weaknesses and difficulties, too. Unlike a good chair, a good garden is constantly changing, as it adapts to the changing circumstances of the weather and the seasons.* (Gopnik, 2016, p.19)

In the model of incremental integration I have presented, the young men are not passive, they are not 'carved' as if made from wood. Rather, relevant service providers are to enable favourable conditions for the young people to grow and develop, as active agents, within certain parameters. This is a model of incremental integration that pertains to an ideal type of an integrated subject. In practice, as revealed in the empirical material in Chapter 7, individual support workers, teachers, or foster carers may have had more nuanced understandings of integration or may have questioned assumptions inherent in this model. Michael at YPHS, for example, was uncomfortable with, as he saw it, the focus on Muslim young people as mandated by the Prevent strategy. Similarly, Cynthia, who worked for the virtual school in Broomshire, was well aware of the difficulties faced in college by some of the young men who had little previous experience of formal education prior to flight. In principal, however, this model of incremental integration is one which forms a best fit in terms of good practice and is one which holds considerable power in terms of the latitude for action of the young men.

In the next section, I focus on the understandings and practices of integration from the point of view of the young men themselves. This offers a more nuanced and varied understanding of integration and the agency in this context.

YOUNG MEN'S UNDERSTANDINGS AND PRACTICES OF INTEGRATION

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I integrated Kohli's (2011) three trajectories of resettlement with the conceptual framework of social capital advanced by Ager and Strang (Home Office, 2004; Ager and Strang, 2008). The model of this reconciliation is reproduced in Figure 23 below.

Safety

In Chapter 3, I identified friendships of a socially bonding nature as instrumental in creating spaces of safety. The empirical material in Chapter 7 demonstrated the significance of bonding-type friendships for many of the young men particularly at the beginning of their

time of resettlement. These friendships were important in creating a sense of safety in different ways. For instance, sharing a language meant that young men could converse with each other, and have companionship, before they had learnt English. Thus, Zoran and Saad, who were both Kurdish, became good friends in the early months of resettlement, as did Bashir and Abdullah, who were both Sudanese and spoke Arabic. Bashir and Abdullah arrived in Broomshire at the same time, thus they were able to experience aspects of resettlement together; they were companions. Semere and Abraham, who were both Tigrinya speakers from Eritrea, arrived separately. Semere was in some ways a role model for Abraham, as he already knew his way around Rothport and could speak English well by the time Abraham arrived.

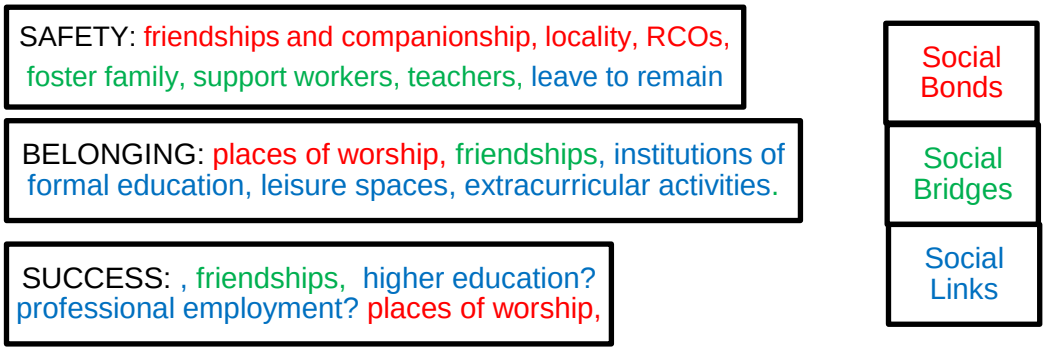


Figure 23 (author's own) Reconciliation of Ager and Strang's Indicator of Integration (Home Office, 2004) and Kohli's (2011) trajectories of resettlement for unaccompanied minors.

These friendships of social bonds were particularly intense but time limited. Zoran and Serhat fell out during the summer of 2017. Bashir and Abdullah stayed on good terms, but the closeness of their relationship faded after some months; when I got to know them over the spring and summer of 2017, they still lived together but they tended to socialise separately. There is an elision here between the trajectories of belonging and safety; I understood some of the young men to be creating spaces of safety for themselves through building socially-bonding friendships with those who shared a language, a culture, or a country of origin. These commonalities between young men were about belonging in terms of the lives the young men had left behind, and these commonalities helped the young men to feel safe. This is evident, not just in the friendships of the young men but in the relationship the young men developed with the cafés and people of Marlowe Street.

I introduced the space of Marlowe Street in Chapter 5 of this thesis, detailing the array of cafés, barber shops and other outlets where many of the young men would spend time,

specifically during the early months of resettlement. These were spaces run by Kurdish, Eritrean, Sudanese and other men and women from countries familiar to the accompanied minors. They offered, for that time, a sense of safety through familiarity and belonging. Yet over time, many of the young men stopped visiting Marlowe Street so frequently. Abraham and Ibrahim discussed how they had both stopped going there every day after a year or so, as they felt it was preventing them from learning English and thus progressing with their studies. Abdullah also said that he would now only go once a week or so to visit the mosque and the Sudanese café.

Similarly, over time, some of the young men's friendships built on social bonds became less intense or ended altogether. Relationships of belonging become less about providing that space of initial safety. I discuss this further in the next section. Trajectories of safety, belonging and success (Kohli, 2011) hinged entirely on a favourable outcome from the asylum system. This is something acknowledged within existing literature to differing degrees. In their *Indicators of Integration*, Ager and Strang (Home Office, 2004), identify 'Rights and Citizenship' as one domain (see Chapter 3), as 'used to assess the extent to which refugees are provided with the basis for full and equal engagement within UK society (p. 23). Whilst the domain of 'Rights and Citizenship' are described as a foundation to integration, there is no explicit recognition that integration processes are entirely frustrated in the eventuality of a negative asylum decision (ibid.). However, the *Indicators of Integration* developed by Ager and Strang (Home Office, 2004) pertains specifically to refugee integration, rather than integration of asylum-seekers, so the acquisition of leave to remain is in fact a precondition of this model of integration (ibid.).

Kohli (2011) is explicit in recognising leave to remain as integral to all forms of safety for unaccompanied minors:

> *The foundation of being and feeling safe comes through legally winning the right to remain in the country of asylum indefinitely.* (p.316)

My empirical material in Chapter 6 of this thesis was illustrative of the imperative of acquiring leave to remain for the young men as they sought to integrate and build new lives for themselves. Zoran's story, for instance, revealed a long, protracted and frustrating process through the asylum system, with an uncertain future ahead of him as he was refused asylum at initial application and at appeal. In Chapter 6, I also described Abraham's anxiety as he waited for a decision on his application for asylum, and the months of self-isolation from his friends. I described Hama's extensive fasting after *Ramadan* as he tried to secure God's favour for a positive asylum decision. I also described Zakir and Farid's desires for a bank account, which were put on hold while they waited for a Home Office decision on their asylum claims. As such, it is not just the eventuality of being refused asylum that undermines integration, but the process of applying for asylum itself: the anxiety of waiting

for a decision, the restrictions in place as an asylum seeker (for example, learning to drive, opening a bank account, and possessing a travel document), and the series of assaults against one's mental and physical wellbeing through strategies of testing, assessing, verifying and being disbelieved. An understanding of integration of unaccompanied minors requires attention to the ways in which the asylum process precludes the establishment of safety for young people, and thus undermines further integration in terms of belonging and success.

Belonging

With this in mind, I return to the theme of belonging, taken from Kohli's (2011) model, and consider how the young men created and sustained spaces of belonging over time. I have discussed already how friendships amongst the young asylum seekers ('social bonds') had contributed to the creation of spaces of safety for the young men, and how these spaces also provided a sense of belonging when all else was so unfamiliar. In Chapter 7, I also drew attention to the friendships with people beyond the immediate circle of asylum-seeking peers, ('social bridges') formed and sustained by some of the young men. In particular, I focussed on the friendship of Abraham and Ibrahim, who were both motivated to achieve academically and professionally and thus felt the need to leave behind Marlowe Street, as a daily activity. In some cases, where friendships of social bonds were built on historical commonalities such as country of origin, friendships of social bridges were established on present and anticipated commonalities such as academic attainment.

For many young men, college provided an opportunity to make friends based on social bridges, and also to extend one's network of relationships through extra-curricular activities such as sports and music. This was illustrated in Chapter 7, when Abdullah spoke of his many friends from different nationalities at college, the various football clubs he took part in, and his socialising at the gym. Spaces such as college, Rothport Youth Works and sports clubs were environments where many of the young men were able to create spaces of belonging based on social bridges and social links. Hama was able to call on these social links to gather letters of support, for example, from his local gym and from the youth club, to bolster his asylum appeal. In Chapter 7, Kofi also spoke of his preference for college over the ESOL provision at the RCOs in Rothport; at college, he was able to meet more people his own age and he enjoyed the learning more.

Yet the empirical material in this thesis also demonstrates the necessity of understanding alternative, perhaps less regular, spaces of belonging for the young men. Whilst some of the young men made college attendance and educational attainment a central feature of their lives in Rothport, some did not. In Chapter 7, I describe the difficulties Fazaad faced at college and the concerns that Cynthia, his link teacher with the virtual school, had regarding his attendance. Similarly, Zoran faced difficulties at college regarding his

behaviour around other students and he was excluded for a time. Zoran and Fazaad both formed alternative spaces of belonging amidst the Kurdish community on Marlowe Street; they continued to frequent Marlowe Street despite its prohibition by children's services and in contradiction to the advice of the police. Zoran accessed informal employment there and seemed to find company with the older Kurdish men.

It was more difficult for me, as an outsider, to build an understanding of this alternative space of belonging for Zoran and Fazaad. Fazaad would nod at me when he saw me, but otherwise we did not really have a relationship. Zoran and I would converse more regularly but, whilst concerns were raised by the police and children's services regarding the possibility of Zoran being exploited on Marlowe Street, he did not discuss this with me. When he talked to me about Marlowe Street, it was to tell me that the people he spent time with there were his friends, and that he did not have many others.

I was able to build an understanding, however, of the ways in which young men such as Zoran and Fazaad were excluded from spaces of belonging such as college. Zoran, for example, was making a space of belonging for himself within very different parameters to other young men such as Abraham and Bashir. It was harder for him to achieve educationally because he was starting with very little prior attainment and little confidence. Zoran had been refused asylum and his case for appeal was not strong. Apart from Marlowe Street, all other friendships and social contact for Zoran fell apart. In addition to this, if he were being controlled and exploited by adult men on Marlowe Street, it may have been very difficult for him to leave this space, even if he had wanted to. Indeed, when Zoran did leave, he did so very suddenly and travelled far from the city.

Figures 24 and 25, below, offer alternative empirical models to integration, based on the conceptual model outline in Figure 23 above, and also in Chapter 3 of this thesis. I use the empirical models to help explain the alternative paths of integration for some of the young men. In Figure 25, I demonstrate how spaces of partial safety and belonging for young men such as Zoran, rely more on social bonds, with fewer social bridges and links. This alternative integration needs to be understand in relation with the specific context in which men such as Zoran are located; his latitude for action, and his frame of reference for belonging and success, are mediated to varying degrees by external contributory factors such as prior educational experience, pre-existing relationships prior to arrival, and experiences of seeking asylum.

One final aspect of analysis in regard to belonging concerns the phenomena of competing spaces of belonging. This was revealed in the empirical material in Chapter 7, with Marwan's story. Marwan was in foster care in a village outside of Rothport. Because Marwan was reliant on public transport, it took him several hours each day to travel to and from college and he had to leave social activities such as youth club early in order to catch

the last bus. After some months in foster care, Marwan was anxious to move into independent accommodation in Rothport and took various steps to make this happen. For example, he continued to sleep rough in Rothport for some nights, eventually forcing Greg at Rothport Youth Works to arrange crash pad accommodation for him near the city centre. Marwan's space of belonging had shifted with time and he wanted to live a more independent life with his peers in Rothport rather than remain in foster care. This is illustrative of the elision between the two trajectories of 'belonging' and 'success' I have employed in the conceptual framework for integration in Chapter 3. In Marwan's case, his motivation for success, to live independently and to be able to socialise more freely with his friends, informed his space of belonging. This was similar with Amir, also discussed in Chapter 7, who left Naomi's family home after some months to live independently in social housing. I discuss this in more depth in the next section, where I examine the trajectory of success in light of my empirical material.

Success

For many of the young men, conceptions of success were intimately connected with educational attainment and moving towards professional careers. The ambition to succeed in this way is well-documented in existing literature (e.g. Aciman, 1999; Kohli and Mather, 2003; Jackson et al., 2005). My empirical material revealed this ambition, in some cases, to be strongly informed by a sense of responsibility and obligation towards those who had perhaps paid for them to make the journey from countries of origin. This was often articulated as a moral imperative. Abdullah, for instance, talked about young men going the 'right' or 'wrong' way and illustrated the 'wrong' way as 'sometimes some person doesn't like education' (Interview: Abdullah, 10/17). Ibrahim related this imperative to study to the opportunities he had now in Rothport, as opposed to those he would have had if he had remained in Somalia. In this way, definitions of success were connected with social bonds to family back home, even when contact with relations had been lost.

Definitions of success were also aligned with the realisation of independence signifying an attainment of the status of adulthood. I have alluded to this above in discussing Marwan and Amir's decision to leave foster care and to secure independent accommodation through Rothport's social housing. Success was also connected to forms of social links that were dependent upon possessing leave to remain, such as bank accounts and a driving licence. Without their own bank account, the young men were dependent on being handed cash on a weekly basis by Michael, the UASC support worker at YPHS, and asking for help from their carers. These definitions of success are represented in Figure 24 below, where I have taken the conceptual reconciliation of models of integration presented in Chapter 3 and populated it with my empirical material from subsequent chapters.

I have also produced an adaptation of this model in Figure 25 below, where I use empirical material that reveals different trajectories of safety, belonging and success. Zoran, for example, demonstrated a desire for success within different parameters from some of the other young men, who had leave to remain and were succeeding at college. For instance, Zoran really wanted to stop smoking, and asked for my help in taking him to the stop-smoking clinic at the local pharmacy. He tended to keep these appointments I made for him, and when I could not go with him, he attended independently. Zoran also wanted to take part in mixed martial arts, like his friend Davide. He asked me to show him the route to the boxing gym by bus and then he went independently. Zoran was active in trying to improve his own life, to have a sense of moving forward, but he was prevented by his immigration status and perhaps by his relationships on Marlowe Street, from working towards the long-term aspirations and ambitions of some of his peers.

CONTEXTUALISING INTEGRATION AND VULNERABILITY

In this section, I centre the discussion around two themes. The first relates to the contextuality of integration and the second relates to the concept of agency within positions of vulnerability.

Contextual Integration

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I discussed the shift across the social sciences towards an understanding of the structure of childhood as contextual, as epitomised in the work of Prout and James (1997). Prout and James (ibid.) write that childhood is

> *neither a natural nor a universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies.* (p.8)

and

> *childhood is one variable of social analysis. The social world is composed of multiple childhoods; there is no one universal childhood.* (p.8)

Top-down conceptualisations of integration, as addressed in Chapter 3, proffer an ideal of integration with similar universalised pretentions. The model of incremental integration outlined in Figure 22 in this chapter, presupposes a similar ideal type; there is room for manoeuvre within it but the parameters are fixed. The experiences of the young men in my empirical material suggest that there are a plurality of integration paths and integration destinations; there is not just one way to be, for example, a young Eritrean male in Rothport, or a young Kurdish male in Rothport. Whilst there are ideal types, the young men themselves are active in negotiating these and in realising their own ambitions without particular contexts.

To illustrate the plurality of integration paths, I have taken the reconciliation of models of integration devised in Chapter 3 and revisited above in Figure 23 and produced two further versions, this time populated with material from my empirical chapters.

Figure 24 Empirical Model of Regular Integration

Figure 24 above dovetails neatly with the conceptual reconciliation proposed in Figure 23. In this model, relationships of social bonds are created and sustained by the young men to help create a space of safety. This is facilitated with relationships with the foster family or with teachers and other professionals (social bridges) and with the foundation of legal safety provided with the acquisition of leave to remain (social links). Trajectories of belonging follow, with more friendships of social bridges and social links built through a network of activities and allegiances across the locality. Finally, the trajectory of success is developed, with the young men living independent, adult lives and with a range of social links across higher education and the labour market.

This is a model of integration that, on the surface, fits with the experiences of some of the young men described in the empirical chapters of this thesis. The experiences of Bashir and Abdullah, for example, could be neatly interpreted along this model. A more nuanced and critical understanding of the young men's experiences reveals the shortcomings of this model. For example, Abraham and Hama waited several months for leave to remain and this process negatively impacted subsequent aspects of integration, such as the sustaining of friendships and focus on college. Moreover, this model does not provide for the active nature of the young men in the process of integration; they were not just following a pre-

existing set of steps, but rather taking actions to realise their own understandings of and needs for safety, belonging and success. It just so happens that, in some cases, these understandings were not drastically different from those articulated by the relevant adult professionals and carers in their lives at this time. However, there are some young men described in the empirical material whose experiences vary from this model and for whom the spaces of safety, belonging and success can be conceived differently, as illustrated in Figure 25 below.

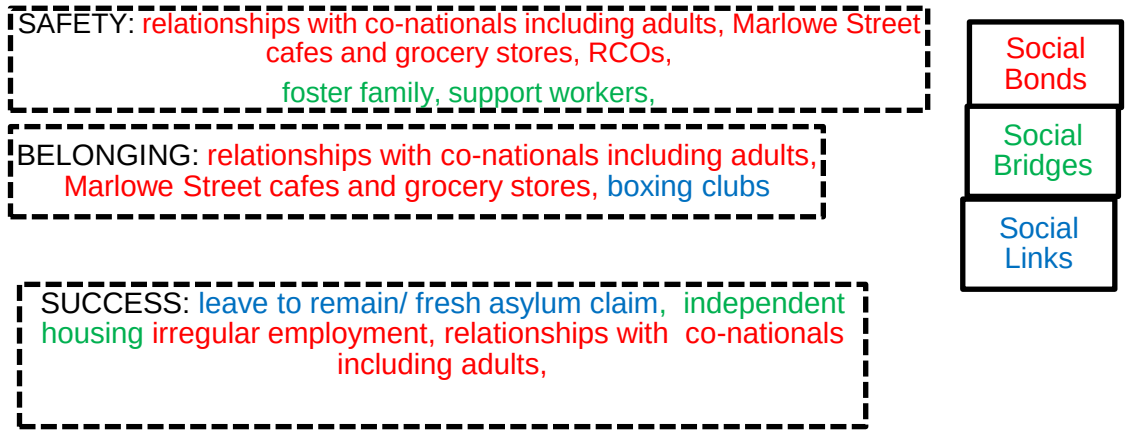


Figure 25 Empirical Model of Alternative Integration

In Figure 25, the trajectories of safety, belonging and success are outlined in an interrupted line, which I have employed to represent the tentative, uncertain nature of these spaces. Primarily, I attribute this to the lack of leave to remain (as featured in the space of safety in Figure 24). Without this, the young men are not safe and relationships that could be employed to develop belonging and success, such as those found in the formal labour market, and the independence of adulthood (being able to access social housing, for example) are out of reach. For some of the young men, (tentative) spaces of belonging rely on social bonds: they do not move away from Marlowe Street and their friendships continue to be with co-nationals rather than those recognisable as social bridges. Zoran, Fazaad, and others did not choose to stop going to Marlowe Street; rather, they continued to go despite it being a prohibited space. Long-term aspirations of success are perhaps not articulated; daily life without the security of legal status may mean that success is understood in more short-term ideals: being able to earn some cash and buy new clothes, or, in Zoran's story, learning to box with other Kurdish men.

Stories of integration that align, more or less, with Figure 25 above, are those that are often missed in social science research related to unaccompanied minors. Or else, they are

stories of integration that are not recognised as integration at all; rather, they are stories of young men who 'slipped through the net' or 'young men that we lost'. I argue that these 'alternative stories' are stories of integration, it is just that 'we' (social workers, teachers, researchers etc.) do not approve of them. These stories are important, however, because they are stories of marginalisation for young men and because they are stories that reveal the processes and structures in place that provoke marginalisation and, with it, a plurality of positions of vulnerability for the young men who came to the UK exercising their right to safety and refuge.

With this in mind, I return now to the concepts of agency and vulnerability in relation to unaccompanied minors. In Chapter 2, I employed the conceptual work of Klocker (2007), who spoke of agency of children in terms of gradations, where children's agency is 'thickened' and 'thinned' in shifting contexts and relationships. In light of my empirical material, I return to this understanding of agency now, centring the discussion on young men's experiences of the asylum system. Discussion around these experiences offer a useful insight into agentive practices within highly oppressive structures.

Agency and Vulnerability

The concept of agency as 'thinned' is employed in Klocker's (2007) work and refers to …

> *decisions and everyday actions that are carried out in highly restrictive contexts, characterised by few viable alternatives'* (ibid., p.85)

From my research there emerged numerous examples in the experiences of the young men where their agency can be considered 'thinned' in certain context and relationships. For example, Zoran and Fazaad had difficulties in college, partly because of their histories in Kurdistan, where neither young man had accessed formal education for some years. They were also disadvantaged by structural arrangements in FE, where ESOL provision was severely stretched and where curriculum design rested on assumptions of prior literacy in the home language. The context of college can therefore be understood as one in which the agency of young men such as Zoran and Fazaad was 'thinned'. Additionally, Marwan's desire to move into independent accommodation in Rothport, near his peers and college, was frustrated by a system of local authority restrictions, which limited Marwan to social care provision in Shelford. In this context, Marwan's agency was 'thinned' so that it was more difficult, albeit not impossible, for Marwan to move to Rothport.

The asylum system is one context where the agency of unaccompanied minors is particularly thinned. This was discussed in Chapter 2 , in reference to age assessment, and illustrated in Chapter 6; my empirical material demonstrated not only the requirements on the young men to secure leave to remain, but also the arbitrary nature of decision-making processes, and the destructive effects of the system on the young men's wellbeing and life

chances. That the asylum system makes young people especially vulnerable to ill-health, marginalisation, and exploitation cannot be stated too strongly. In making this statement, this thesis joins a growing body of literature that documents a punitive and discriminatory system (e.g. Crawley, 2010, 2011; Smith and Jones, 2012; Gill, 2016; Guentner et al., 2016).

In Chapter 2, I asked what sense it made to speak of children as agentive in contexts of such 'thinned' agency. Furthermore, I enquired if there was a risk, in ascribing agency to children in such contexts, that we (as academics or practitioners) risk neglecting their vulnerability (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007). In responding to these questions, in light of my empirical material, I revisit Klocker's (2007) assertion, which was made in reference to female child domestic workers in Tanzania:

> *…focusing only on the downtrodden elements of the Tanzanian child domestic worker's character, her strength, her abilities, and knowledge are either overlooked, or considered insignificant in relation to context.* (p.91).

In my empirical material, the young men demonstrated agency in their responses to the demands of the asylum system; their responses varied according to context and over time. I have framed some of these responses, as I witnessed and interpreted, along a spectrum of positioning oneself in relation to the system. This is illustrated below in Figure 26.

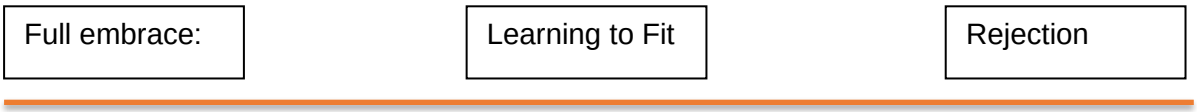


Figure 26 The Responses of the Young Men to the Asylum System

The middle ground, 'learning to fit', is where most behaviour and responses, as I witnessed, can be placed. From this position, the young men made use of the schooling from solicitors and other advocates to frame their stories within the 'victim' mould. This was illustrated in Chapter 6 with the story I relayed of Shehzad, narrating his story in terms that emphasised his vulnerability as he prepared for his asylum appeal.

Moving left along this spectrum, one response I observed from some of the young men was to strive to not only meet the demands of the Home Office but to go over and above these demands. As I detailed in Chapter 6, Hama, for instance, managed to procure the necessary proof regarding his father's death in Kurdistan. He also solicited and obtained letters of support and good character from a host of individuals and organisations across the city, including the gym where he was a member and youth workers at RYW. Other young men, such as Abraham, demonstrated a 'full embrace' of the asylum system; here the demands of the Home Office are internalised by the young men and are framed as a positive and

enjoyable process. Abraham responded to my criticism of the Home Office telling me, 'No! they are good. They do good' (Journal notes, 7/17).

Further to the right of the line, I have designated a position of 'rejection'. This encompasses various responses from the young men. For example, at times the young men demonstrated a refusal to engage in the issue of asylum at all. During one evening at RYW, for instance, when we had a visit from an older, Afghan author talking about the difficulties for Afghans to have their claims recognised, several of the young Afghans moved away to a different corner of the room, and put in their headphones to listen to music. Other young men were angry at times about the asylum process they experienced. Zoran, for example, exclaimed 'fucking Home Office' to me when he was telling me his claim had been rejected. For a time after this rejection, Zoran slept late during the day, then in the late afternoon would make his way to Marlowe Street to be with his friends there. He chose, within the circumstances in which he found himself, to make a life for himself in an alternative, marginal space.

In describing the responses of the young men to the asylum system, I do not intend to diminish the harm done to the young men through this process, nor to overstate their capacity for action in spite of such oppressive structures. Rather, I understand this range of reactions as demonstrative of the small degree of latitude the young men had to at least try to make a highly oppressive and lengthy process slightly more bearable. The process of seeking asylum can be all-encompassing. Faced with cultures and practices of disbelief, young people can find their very identities under attack. By articulating this process as somehow benevolent, or by ignoring it altogether, even if just temporarily, the effects of going through the asylum process may be made manageable.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have drawn together understandings and practices of the integration of unaccompanied minors across the domains of social care, children's services and education as detailed in Chapter 7. Employing the conceptual frameworks of integration from Chapter 3 and agency from Chapter 2, I outlined a programme of integration as 'incremental independence', where the young men move from a space of protective childhood towards adult independence. I drew on the metaphor of 'the garden', where service providers work to provide the right conditions in which the young men can integrate successfully.

Following this, I moved the discussion to young men's understandings and practices of integration, which were organised along the trajectories of safety, belonging and success as advanced by Kohli (2011) and employed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. This discussion centred on the ways in which the young men employed social bonds, bridges and links to develop spaces of safety, belonging and success, and draw attention to the ways in which

conceptualisations of belonging and success shift over time and are mediated by external factors specific to the individual.

The last section of this chapter proposed an understanding of integration as contextual, as demonstrated by the models in Figures 25 and 26, showing variant paths of integration. I then returned to the concept of agency, demonstrating how the young men were able to respond within oppressive structures in different ways. These responses served as resources for the young men to maintain some degree of control over an otherwise alienating and dehumanising process.

The next chapter serves as the conclusion. There I will summarise the main findings, discuss the academic contributions made and the implications for policy and practice. I also outline potential limitations of the study and suggest areas for further research.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter, I return to the research aims that I outlined in Chapter 1, situating my research within an interpretivist framework that aimed to prioritise the experiences and perspectives of young men seeking asylum alone. I then summarise my responses to the research questions, drawing together the conceptual frameworks outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 with the later empirical material. Next, I propose some recommendations for policy and practice before focussing on the contributions of my work to this field of study. Finally, I consider the limitations of this study and set out an agenda for further research.

REVISITING THE RESEARCH AIMS

In this research I sought to attend to the voices and experiences of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the UK. This stemmed from a recognition, across the social sciences, that exploration of children's lives is a valuable field of inquiry (e.g. James and Prout, 1990; Tisdall and Punch, 2012; Holloway, 2014). Alongside this, I aimed to stand in solidarity with asylum-seekers and refugees, who are all-too-often represented in either pejorative (see e.g. Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Banks, 2012; Blumell et al., 2020), paternalistic (Kirkwood, 2017), or depoliticising (Pupavac, 2008) ways. Methodologically, therefore, I approached this research from an interpretivist tradition, seeking to uncover the ways in which people themselves make sense of the world (Prout and James, 1997; Elliot et al., 2016).

My research took as its point of departure the agency of children. However, I sought to problematize and probe the nature of that agency in contexts of resettlement and integration Much contemporary debate and policy on integration stems from top-down, state-led visions of social cohesion; these position certain migrants as 'other', who must adapt to be incorporated into a pre-existing, unified entity (Favell, 2001; Kundnani, 2002; Joppke, 2011; Faist et al., 2013). I wanted to focus instead on the understandings, actions and motivations of the young men themselves with regards to how they made new lives for themselves in places of resettlement. That children are active in their own lives and the lives of those around them is now well-established (James and Prout, 2003; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). The nature of this agency in contexts of integration and seeking asylum is less well-known. Consequently, I aimed to build the relationships to construct understanding about young people's agency in their integration practices. These aims formed the landscape from which I devised the research questions at the heart of this thesis.

My preliminary reading around agency and childhood had led me to a focus on relationships and relationality (e.g. Lee, 2001; Oswell, 2012) and, consequently, I wanted to include the understandings and practices of relevant front-line service providers, such as teachers, foster carers and support workers, in my research. As a former schoolteacher myself with a professional background in inner-city London, it was this experience that had drawn me to postgraduate research in this area. The relationships between the young men and the adults in their lives played, I suspected, an important mediating role in day-to-day experiences for the young men in this study.

RESPONDING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I oriented my research around two key questions, detailed below:

1. How do unaccompanied minors practise integration into British society and how are they agentive in doing so?
2. How is the integration of unaccompanied minors understood and addressed in the policy and practice of front-line service providers?

My empirical findings demonstrated the young men to be active in building, sustaining and negotiating relationships and that these relationships varied with time and context. Initially, at the beginning of resettlement, the young men formed friendships of a social-bonding nature. In some cases, such as the friendship between Abdullah and Bashir, this was a friendship based on companionship and shared experience in a context of unfamiliarity. In other cases, such as Abraham's friendship with Semere, there were forms of peer mentoring. Over time, these relationships shifted, and, in part, this was due to the young men learning English and being able to build friendships across social bridges. Alongside this, some of the young men began to look towards achieving ambitions in terms of education and building a profession, and their friendships reflected this; they were friendships formed over shared ambition and future directions.

For many of the young men, these ambitions were long-standing and provided a sense of responsibility and obligation; it was incumbent upon some of the young men to make a success of their lives in the UK as their families in countries of origin had, in some cases, paid a lot of money for the journey. 'Success', in these cases, meant educational attainment and a professional career. In other cases, the young men demonstrated their own integration paths that differed from this narrative. These were paths that continued to be based more on social bonds, with the prioritisation of generating income in the short-term. The young men on such paths were in some ways less visible and the factors mediating their choices were rarely articulated openly. I questioned the relevance of the concept of agency in situations that were highly exploitative, drawing attention to the ways in which the

young men would make use of resources that were available to them. Zoran, for example, sought to build a place of belonging on Marlowe Street for a time at least, in terms that enabled him to feel he had some control in his life and some people to whom he was accountable.

I continued this questioning of agency within the young men's experiences of the asylum system. I drew attention here to the ways in which agency can be thinned by the asylum system and its accompanying requirements on the young men. I argued here that the young men negotiated and made sense of these requirements, including full, enthusiastic compliance as well as rejection of and self-removal from the system.

In my discussion of the understanding of the agency of unaccompanied minors from the perspective of relevant service providers, I re-visited once more the domains of social care, accommodation and formal education. I drew together commonalities of practice and understanding based on a model of 'incremental independence' which positioned the young men in relation to stages of integration, commencing with a space of child-like safety and protection through to adult independence. From this, I developed an understanding of the role of service providers as providing 'the right conditions' for the integration of unaccompanied minors. Childhood agency here is thus contained within certain parameters; there is an ideal type of an integrated subject towards which the young men are steered by the adult professionals, carers and paraprofessionals in their lives.

I employed these responses to my research questions to propose an understanding of integration as contextual; there is in fact a plurality of integration paths taken by the young men. In some cases, their experiences seemed at least to correspond with models of integration, such as that I proposed in Figure 12 in Chapter 3, although a closer investigation revealed complexities of experience that are captured by this model. The process of attaining leave to remain, most notably, meant that spaces of safety and, consequently, belonging and success were tentative and contingent for many of the young men. In other cases, as I demonstrated in Figure 25 in Chapter 8, trajectories of safety, belonging and success were negotiated very differently. In these examples, the concept of 'incremental independence' and the practices that centre around this are found wanting.

In responding to the research questions, I propose that there is a lacuna in understandings of the integration of unaccompanied minors and, therefore, the policies and practices in place that are intended to facilitate this integration. Most notably, this rests on the nature of the asylum system in the UK. Kohli (2011), amongst others, has clearly advocated for unaccompanied minors to attain a secure legal status in order to construct safe foundations on which to build. My research echoes this but, in addition, attests to a reality of the process of securing asylum, which in itself prohibits integration. The process of applying for asylum for unaccompanied minors is destructive and dehumanising by design. It is a practice of

bordering, built on disbelief and anti-immigration rhetoric. Attaining leave to remain is a stage unlike any other in the integration process because all else hinges on this positive outcome. As such, understandings of integration for unaccompanied minors need to recognize not just the importance of acquiring leave to remain, but also the impact of the process of applying for asylum on the daily life of the young men.

I also propose that understandings and policies of integration emanating from statutory bodies, are neglectful of young people's personal histories. There is an assumption that processes of integration begin on arrival, as if this constitutes 'page 1' in a new life. My research reveals young men with histories, with familial relationships, with obligations and responsibilities towards those they left behind, and these histories continue to inform experiences in the present and ambitions for the future.

The so-called 'new sociology of childhood' prioritises the validity of children's experiences as meaningful in the present, not just in terms of what they herald for an adult future (Prout and James, 1997). At the same time, the young men have their own conceptions of the future and experiences of the past, which inform their present. Understandings of unaccompanied minors need to see these young men as existing prior to arrival in hugely varied contexts and as envisaging futures on their own terms.

With this in mind, I discuss below recommendations for policy and practice as informed by my research.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

It feels difficult at first to make recommendations for asylum policy and practice when investigation has revealed such a magnitude of systemic shortcomings. How does one make recommendations for Home Office practice in this area when the asylum system itself is founded on an inherently racist coloniality (Mayblin, 2017; Carver, 2019). At the time of writing (June 2020), there has been a global resurgence in protests and calls for radical reforms centring on the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. Potentially, this is a watershed moment. Colston is down and it seems Rhodes will follow[27]. The magnitude of systemic failure, in the asylum system and beyond, does not preclude reform. Rather, it makes it all the more necessary.

[27] The statue of Edward Colston, a 17th century slave trader, was pulled down during a Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol on 7th June 2020 (Morris, 2020). On 18th June 2020, Oriel College, Oxford, announced its intention to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes, a 19th Century imperialist and coloniser of Southern Africa (BBC News, 2020). There had been calls for the removal of both statues since 2015.

Radical Reform of the Asylum System

In offering recommendations for policy and practice, the most urgent is to make the asylum process for unaccompanied minors fit for purpose. The purpose of the asylum system is, in its own terms, to offer protection to those who have left their country of origin and are unable to go back because they fear persecution. A body of legislation also provides for forms of protection (other than refugee status) to those individuals who may face torture or other degrading treatment if they were to return to their country of origin. My research has found, in congruence with a large body of existing literature (e.g. Robinson, 1999; Squire, 2009; Guentner et al., 2016; Burridge and Gill, 2017; Mayblin, 2017), the asylum process to be exclusionary, highly arbitrary and a source of structural violence against individuals who are already in highly vulnerable positions.

Calls for reform of the asylum system in the UK are plentiful. The Scottish Refugee Council has called for 'fundamental reform' including investment in the system 'to ensure that its decisions are good-quality, fair and just' and restoring the right to work for those seeking asylum and to those who have been refused asylum but for whom there is no possibility of return to country of origin (Scottish Refugee Council, 2020). Specifically, in relation to unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the UK, the UNHCR (2019) proposes the implementation of a series of strict procedural safeguards including 'the provision of child friendly information and legal advice and representation, effective child participation and written, reasoned decisions at each stage' and a 'modified process where a claim for **asylum or other form of international protection can be indicated *later*, after legal advice'** (p.9, bold and italics in original). The UNHCR (ibid.) also proposes the appointment of an independent legal guardian for unaccompanied children, which, from an analysis of the empirical material in this thesis, is a recommendation I would echo.

An evaluation of the Scottish Guardianship Service Pilot (Crawley and Kohli, 2013) found 'a wealth of benefits of Guardianship for young people who are seeking asylum or have been trafficked' (p.89). UNICEF and The Children's Society (2014) has also called for a guardianship system in place for unaccompanied and separated migrant children, who need 'one consistent individual to oversee and co-ordinate agencies, services and processes which the child needs to navigate' (p.1). My research has demonstrated the benefits for the young men of having an adult in their lives, who is consistent and caring and able to be present with them as they build new lives for themselves over time; a guardianship model could institutionalise this provision, so that it is a young person's right, rather than a matter of serendipity.

One recommendation I make regarding the asylum system is to give a greater role to the Department for Education (DfE) in overseeing the support for unaccompanied minors. This is a recommendation suggested by the Joint Committee on Human Rights (2013), as the

DfE is the department responsible for safeguarding children and young people. In their report (ibid.), the Joint Committee state:

> *We recommend in that regard that the DfE should be given responsibility for administering grant funding to local authorities for the care of unaccompanied migrant children, as a clear signal that best interests should be given priority in its distribution.* (p.3).

I recommend all responsibility for immigration and asylum, for unaccompanied minors especially, but also for adults, and for families, be removed from the Home Office altogether. This is a pledge made by the Liberal Democrats prior to the 2019 General Election (Jankowicz, 2019), who argued that the Home Office had a 'toxic culture' which had produced 'scandal after scandal'. The Lib Dems suggested a 'non-political agency' would be established to administer asylum claims and visa applications (ibid.). There is an incongruity between the obligations of the British state to protect child asylum seekers and to look to their best interests, and the realities of the asylum system as demonstrated in my empirical material. Cultures of disbelief, underpinned by systemic racism, are endemic to the asylum process. For the welfare of those seeking asylum, in positions of such vulnerability, we need to remove this responsibility from the Home Office.

Rethinking the National Transfer Scheme

The National Transfer Scheme was established with the intention of reducing pressure on those local authorities who, by virtue of geography, were receiving a disproportionately high number of unaccompanied minors (Home Office and Department for Education, 2018). Research has demonstrated that 'neither children's legal rights, nor their best interests are served by living in areas of high concentration' (Wilding, 2017b, p.270). From my research, however, I identify a number of problems with the National Transfer Scheme in its present configuration. Chief among these is the dearth of quality, legal representation for unaccompanied minors who are dispersed to areas of the country with no, or little, provision in this area. As I detailed in Chapter 6, this situation has been exacerbated further by cuts to and changes in legislation affecting legal aid provision. With this in mind, I propose the government implement fully the recommendations made by the Law Society (2017) in regards to reforming LASPO (2012b). In addition to this, the system of dispersal of unaccompanied minors should be rethought with a view to the 'clustering' in specific areas where service provision can be concentrated. Existing research has found that clustering:

> *enables UAMs* (unaccompanied minors) *to have contact with other young people of a similar background as a supportive practice that militates against placement breakdown, while community venues, schools, churches or mosques become important locations for the formation of networks* (Ní Raghallaigh, 2013, p.100).

Clustering is therefore a policy that, if administered successfully, would address shortcomings in service provision including legal representation but would also provide favourable environments for young people to meet and make friends in situations similar to their own, and to access community and cultural spaces, such as places of worship and culturally appropriate food, that would facilitate their resettlement and wellbeing.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Existing literature pertaining to integration in the UK and beyond tends to focus on community relations between ethnic minority and White British populations (e.g. McGhee, 2008; Meer and Modood, 2009; Joppke, 2011; Favell, 2014a; Heath and Demireva, 2014; Modood, 2017; Cantle, 2018). There is also a body of literature centring on the integration of refugees (Robinson, 1998; Ager and Strang, 2004; Bakker et al., 2016). My research contributes to the literature on integration with a focus specifically on unaccompanied minors who, in many cases, are yet to acquire leave to remain. Consequently, there is a focus in my research on what it means to be building a life tentatively, when everything is contingent upon an eventual Home Office decision. Whilst there is research on child refugees and asylum seekers (Rutter, 2003, 2006), my research was conducted with young men on the cusp of legal adulthood, many of whom turned 18 during the fieldwork months. The fieldwork took place in the early months of the National Transfer Scheme, where areas of the country, including Broomshire, which featured heavily in my research, were receiving asylum seekers for the first time. My research thus combines a number of specific phenomena and areas of investigation making it a unique and original piece of scholarship.

There is a wealth of scholarship pertaining to migration and asylum which testifies to systemic failings and exclusionary practices (e.g. Sales, 2002; Squire, 2009; Guentner et al., 2016; Burridge and Gill, 2017). Whilst government policy and popular discourse has invoked highly negative portrayals of refugees and asylum seekers (e.g. Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Banks, 2012), counter-narratives have often turned to sympathetic but equally stereotypical depictions of victims (Malkki, 1996; Pupavac, 2008). Pupavac (ibid.) writes:

> *refugee advocacy in Britain, if not depicting refugees as exceptionally talented, represents refugees as traumatized, depoliticized, feminized subjects.* (p.272)

My research, built over months of fieldwork, prioritised getting to know the young men through relationships; they are portrayed as whole, inevitably complex individuals with their own histories, futures and shifting relationships to people and place. It is a piece of scholarship that speaks to the rights of young men seeking asylum simply because they are human in need of state protection. In some cases, the young men I came to know fulfilled the statutory criteria of the 'good and deserving' (ibid.); perhaps some of them will be the engineers and doctors of the future. Others will in all likelihood, given the chance, lead very

ordinary and mundane lives. My research contributes to a growing body of literature (e.g. Briskman et al., 2008; Pupavac, 2008; Yeo, 2020) that attempts to reframe the narrative around refuge as an obligation towards fellow members of humanity, not just those who are exceptional or rendered especially vulnerable.

Finally, my research contributes to a body of scholarship in revealing understandings of integration as comprising multiple trajectories; there exists a plurality of ways in which unaccompanied minors build new lives for themselves. This is important to know, because with these trajectories come risks of marginalisation, or rendering young people vulnerable through misunderstandings, and of the breakdown of relationships between young people and service providers. This matters because, as a society, we have a duty of care towards these young people and this is especially so in contemporary society, which is witnessing a growing threat from voices of populist xenophobia (Roth, 2017; Mondon and Winter, 2020).

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The limitations of this study are, in some respects, also a strength. Methodologically, it is grounded in a subjectivism, where I engage with multiple realities, with the intersubjective nature of knowledge formed and the embeddedness of knowledge claims in particular relations of power. Whilst my research reveals commonalities of experience with other studies conducted with unaccompanied minors (e.g. Kaukko and Wernesjö, 2017; Rogers et al., 2018), I make no claims of replicability nor upscaling. The context of this research is very time-specific, with fieldwork conducted in the years following the so-called 'Refugee Crisis' in Europe and the National Transfer Protocol only recently established. Policy and practice towards child asylum seekers were particularly sensitive at that time.

My fieldwork was limited in terms of my linguistic abilities; I am only fluent in English and was thus not able to communicate extensively with many unaccompanied minors without the use of an interpreter. Furthermore, I had gained access to my participants through volunteering formally with two charities working in Rothport and Broomshire. Consequently, there were certain limitations and requirements placed on me by these organisations in terms of my relationships with the young men. For instance, YPHS policy was against engaging with young people through social media, which would have provided a potentially valuable way of communicating with participants.

I was also limited in my study by the nature of some of the activities taking place on Marlowe Street and the reluctance many participants had to discuss what was happening here. This was particularly the case with adults who did not have leave to remain, were working irregularly and needed to remain below the radar. There were also limitations to the places I felt safe visiting.

AGENDA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

At the time of writing, further research centring on the experiences of unaccompanied minors during the Covid-19 pandemic and aftermath would be pertinent. It would be important the service provision towards unaccompanied minors at this time and to explore the relationships and daily lives of the young men during a time of social distancing.

More broadly, there is value in a follow-up study with these young men. I remain in contact with many of these young men, who are now accessing higher education or employment and living independently. There would be value in developing understandings of how these young men are negotiating early adulthood, particularly at a time when the city of Rothport, like much of the country and beyond, is being forced to discuss its legacy in relation to racialized violence and its practices of structural racism. There is also scope in further research to focus more closely at other actors in the system, including faith leaders, teachers and foster families. The subject of seeking asylum on the grounds of religious conversion remains an unexplored area as do experiences of young LGBTQ asylum seekers. Little is known about the young men who 'age out' of the asylum system and move from local authority care to destitution. Furthermore, there is considerable scope for investigation in cases of kinship care for unaccompanied minors, as well as young asylum seekers who are with their families. Research into the experiences of female asylum seekers and younger children would contribute to a growing body of scholarship and could be used to inform and reform best practice. Further use of collaborative methods and co-construction could reveal findings of those in marginalised positions and could further give voice to young people who are rarely heard in research and policy.

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